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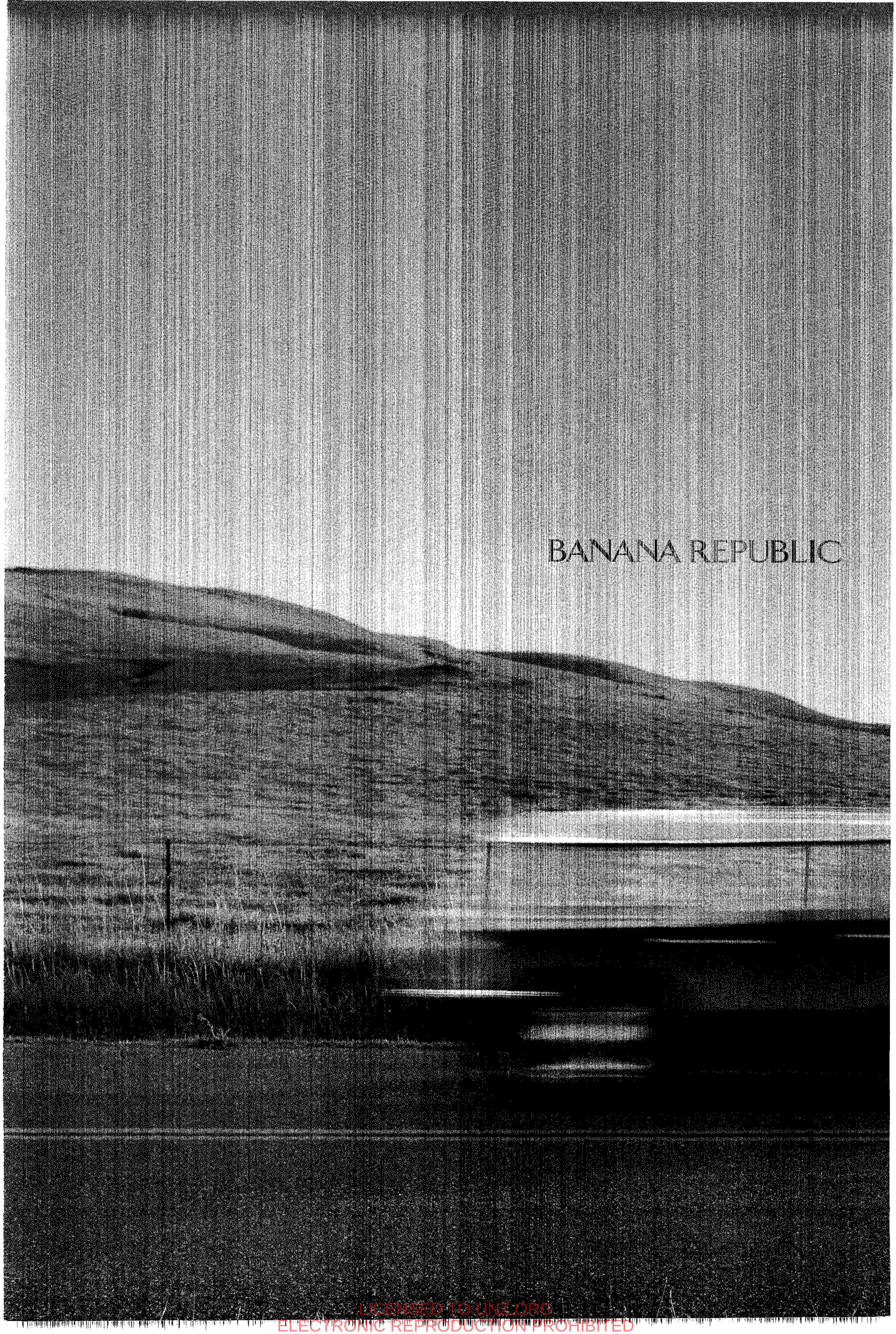

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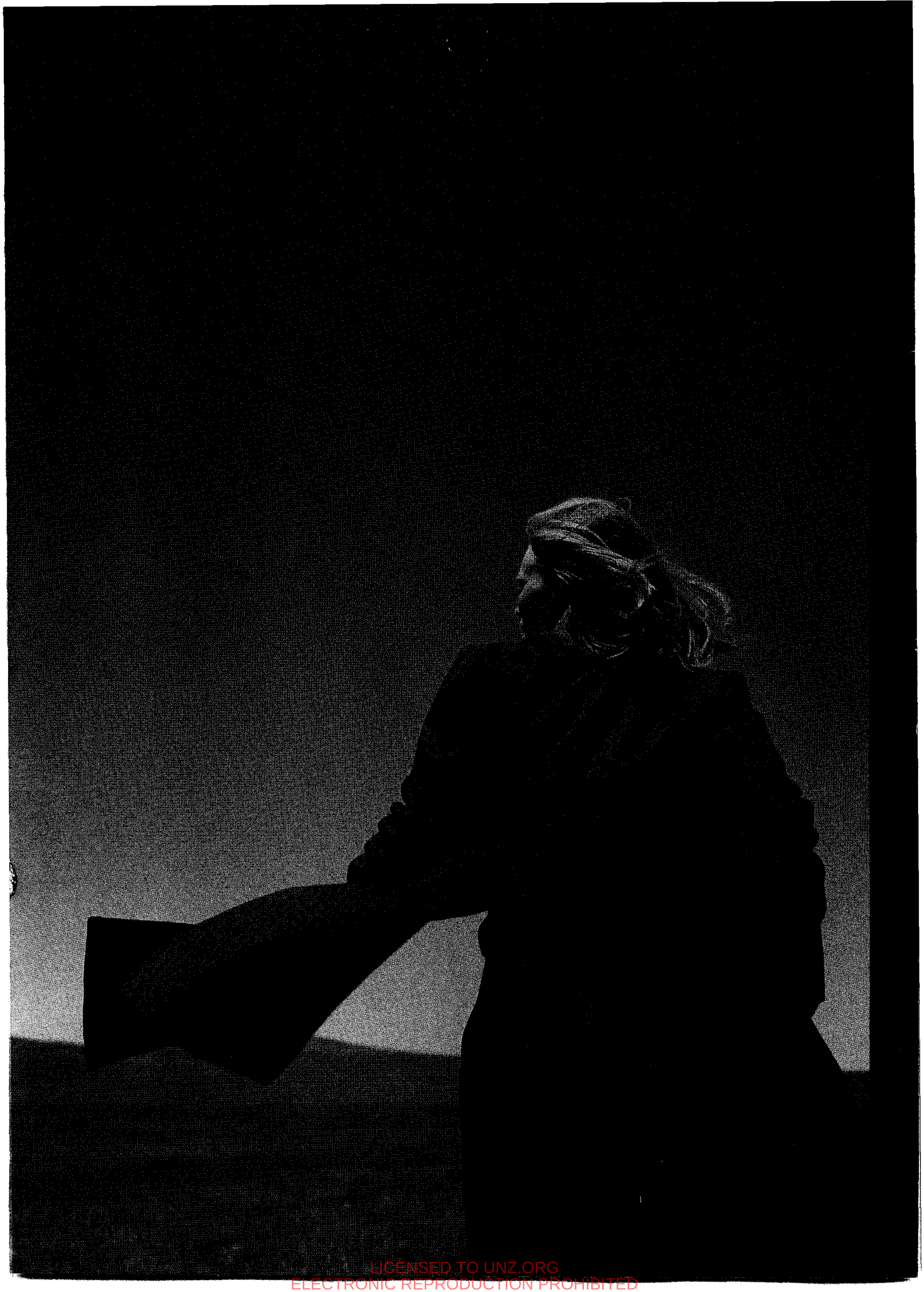

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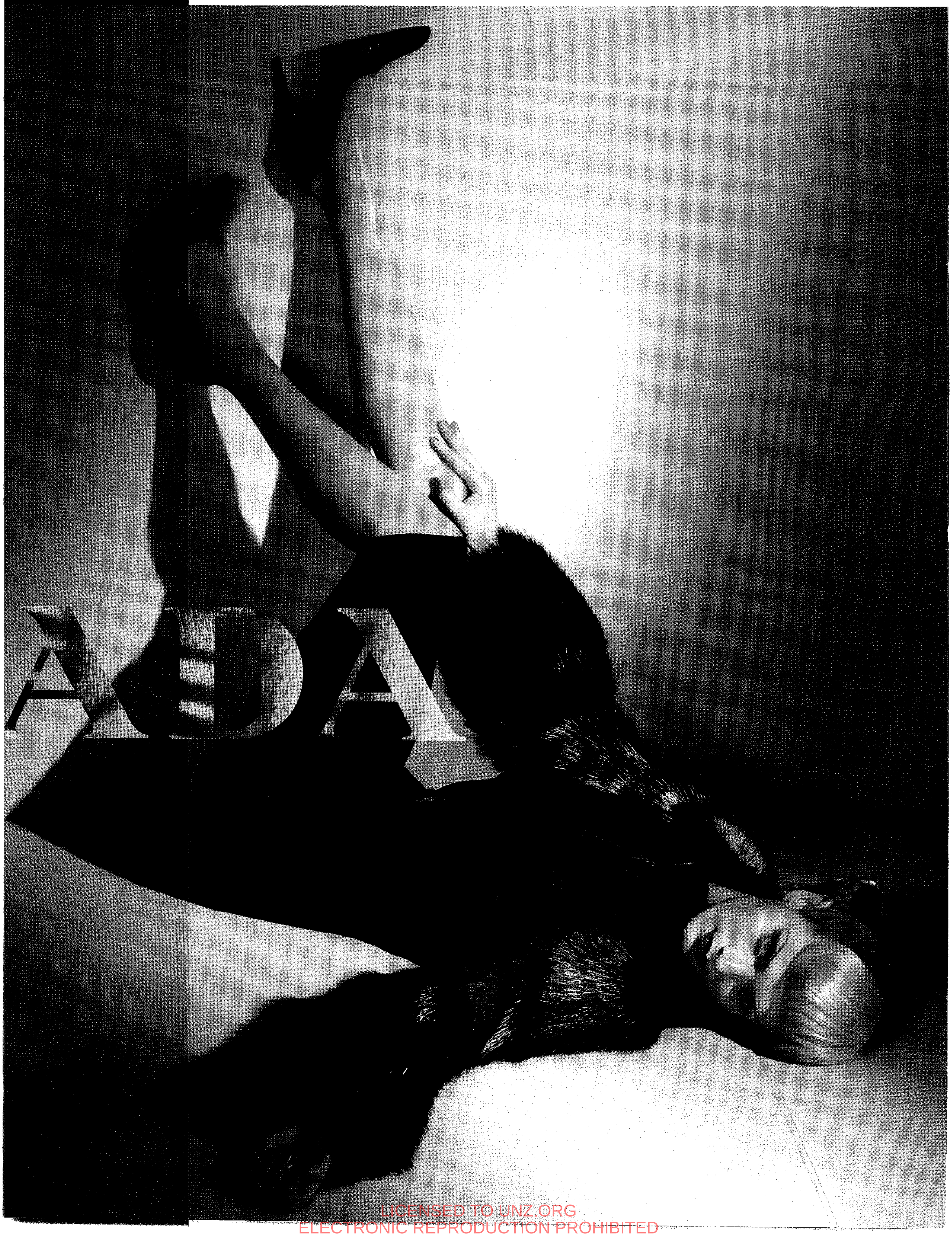
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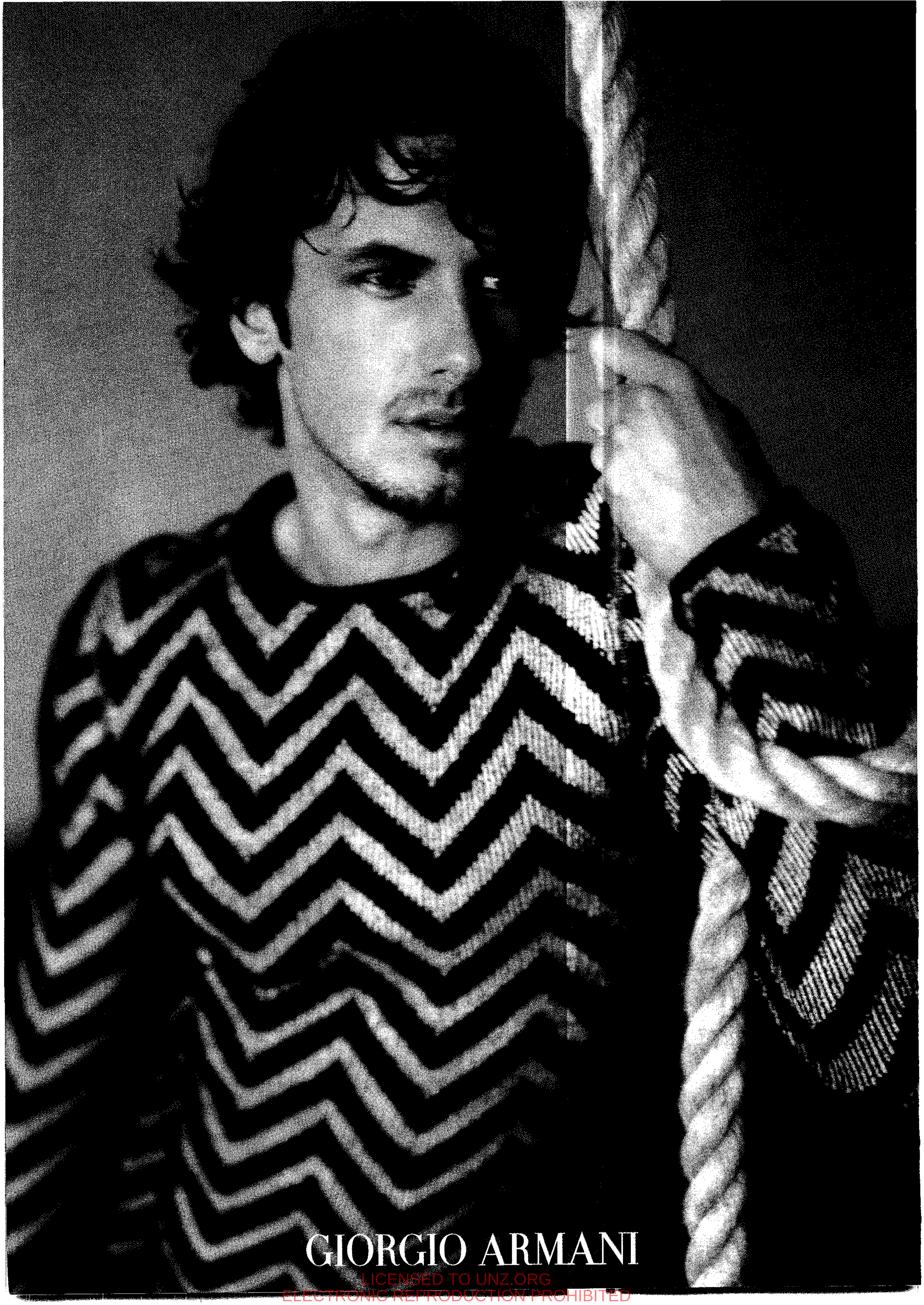
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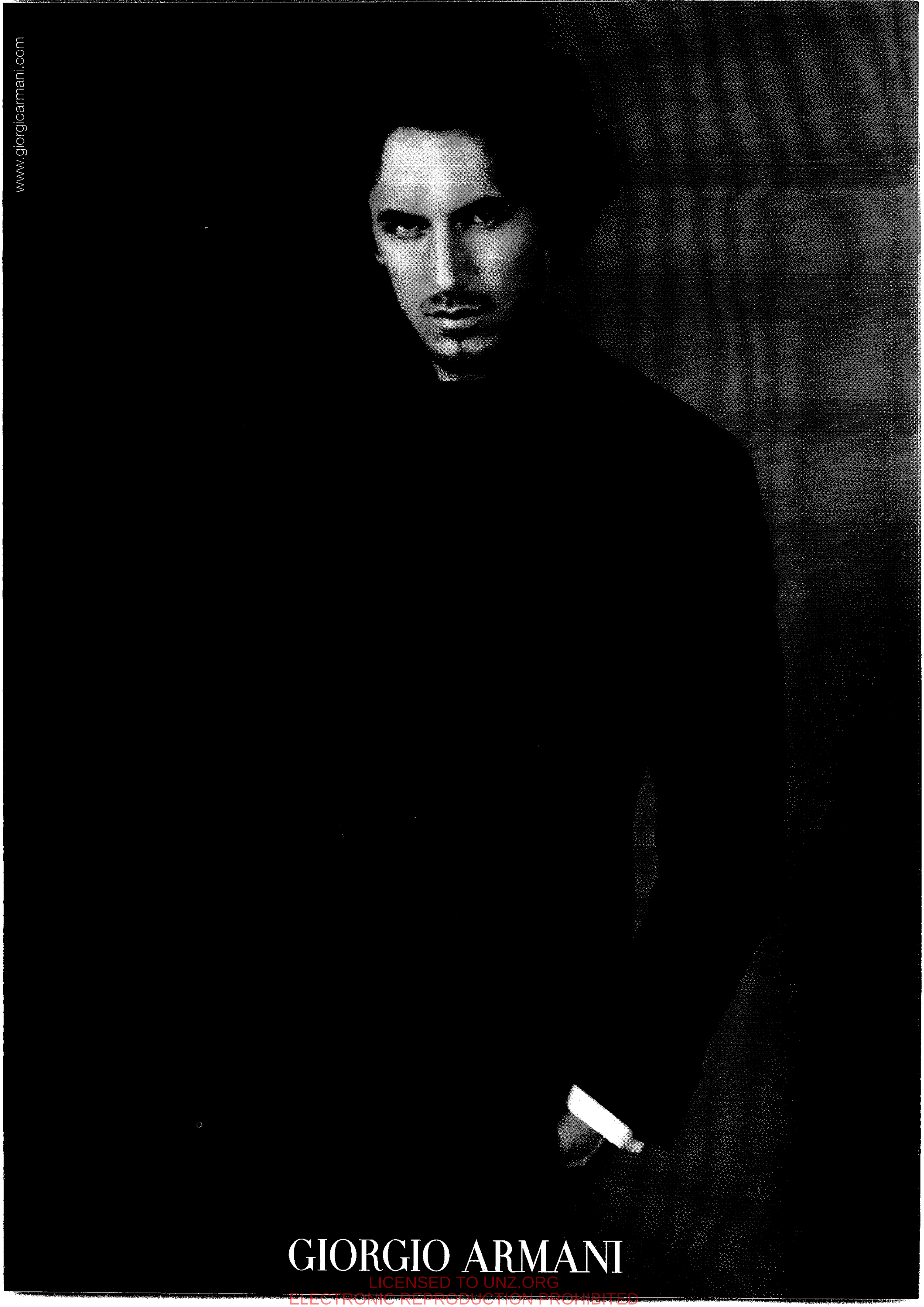
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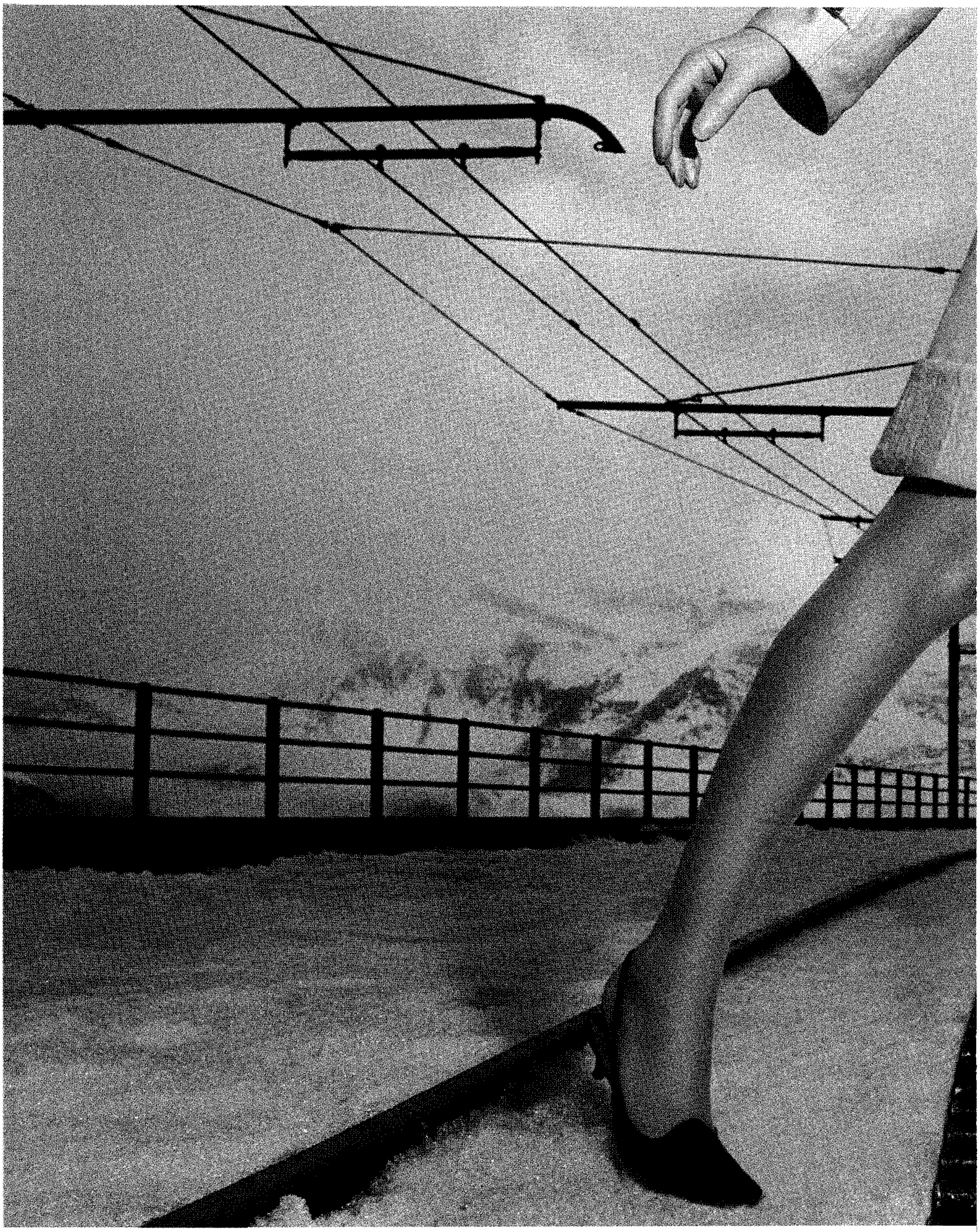

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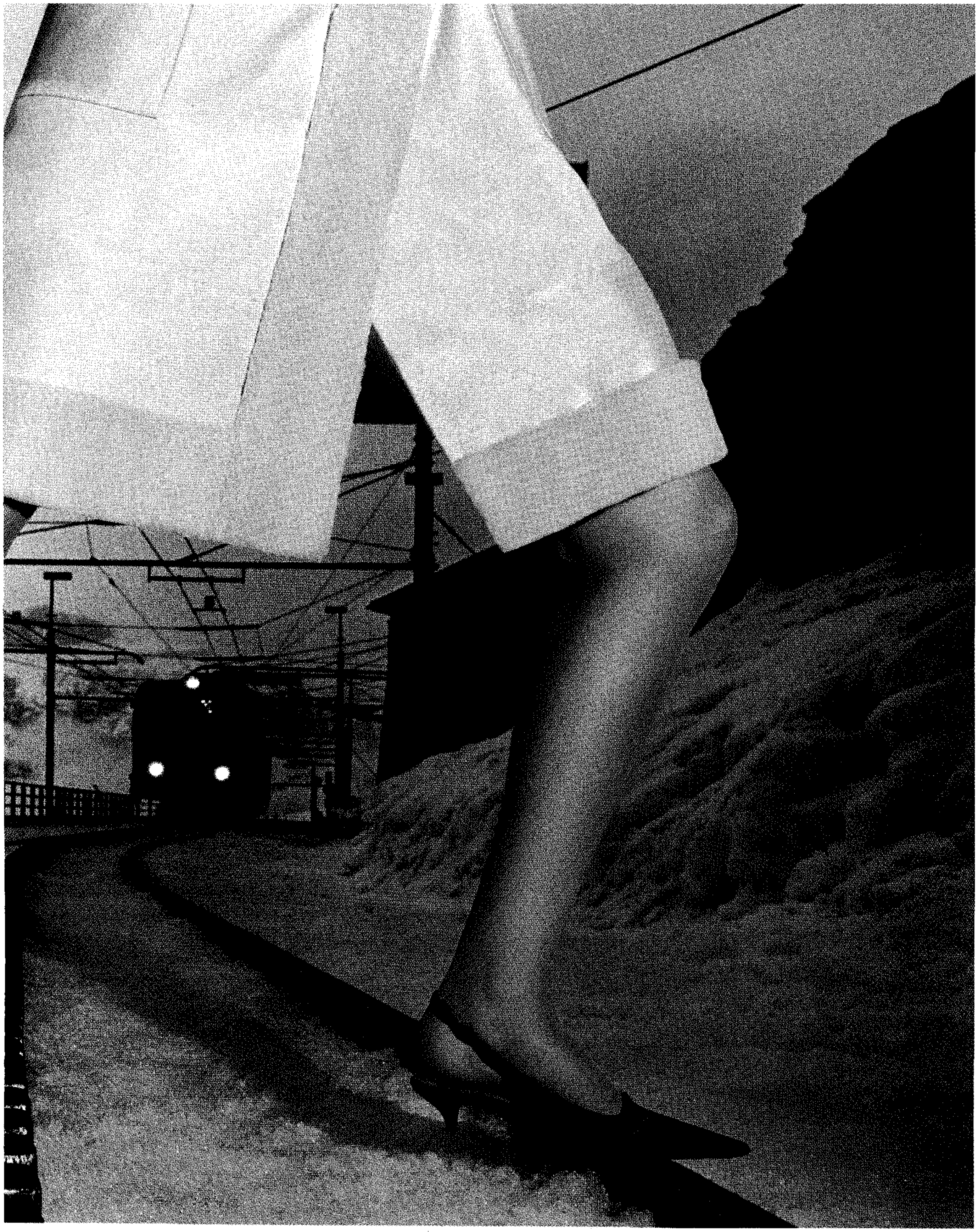

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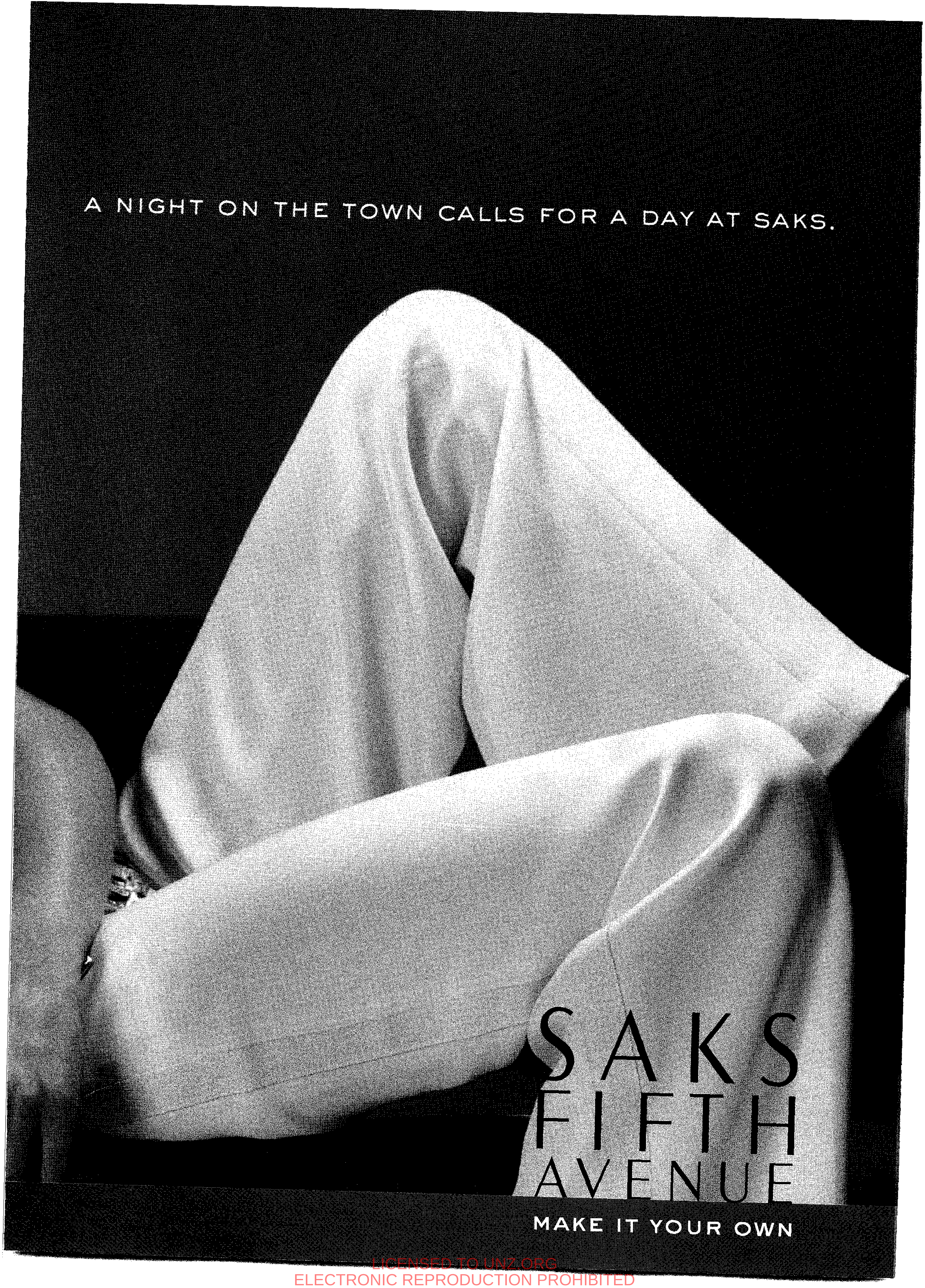
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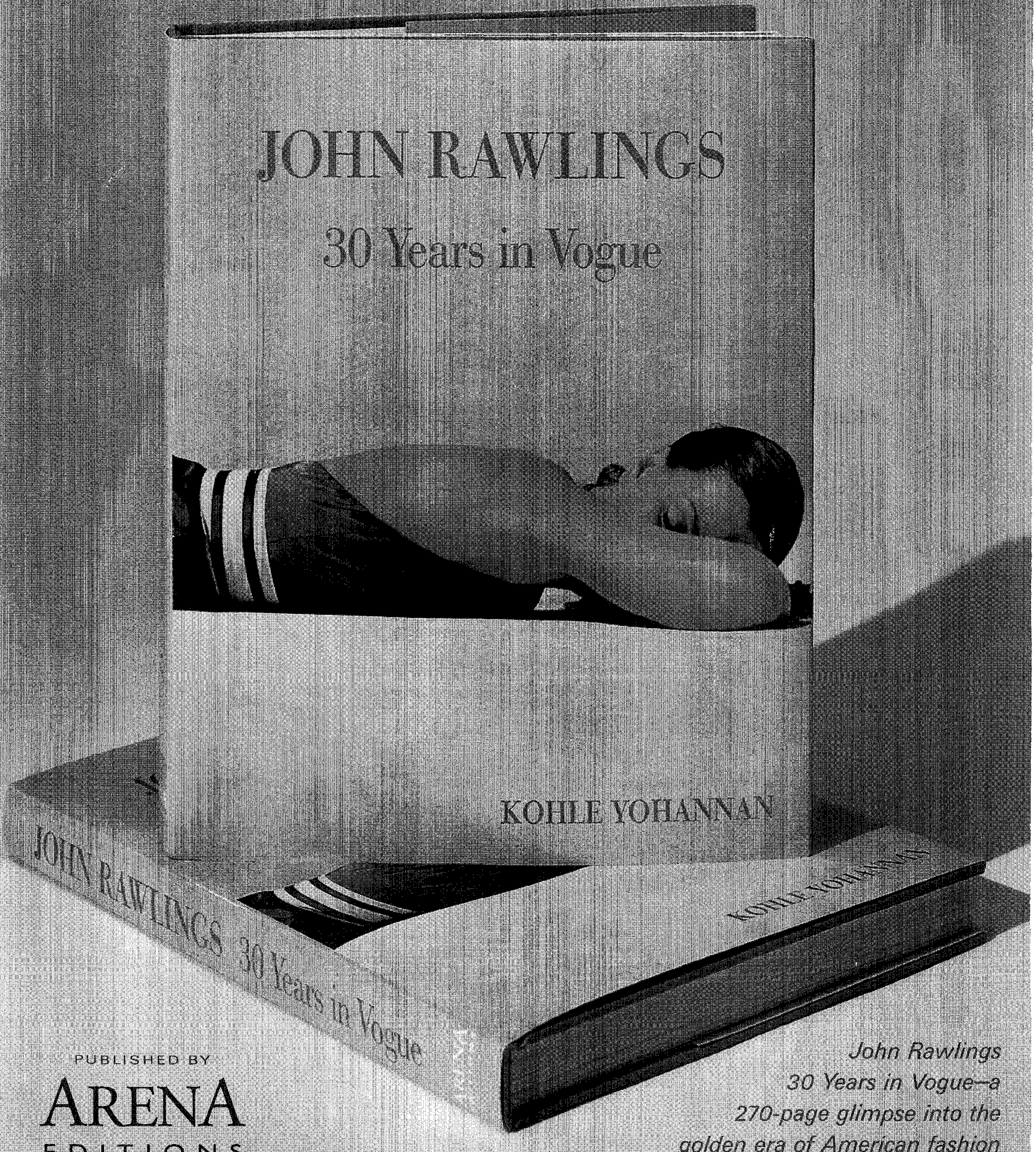
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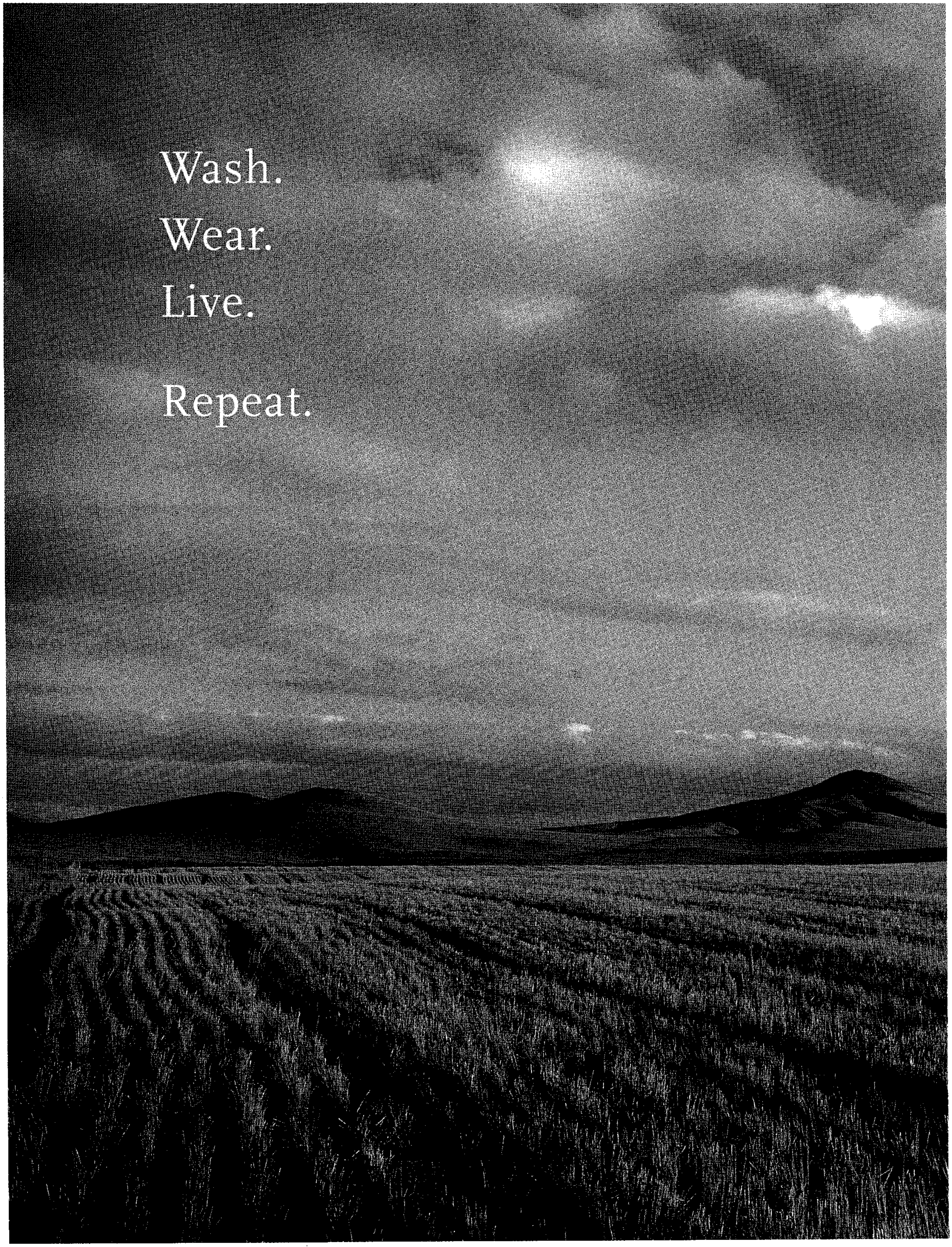
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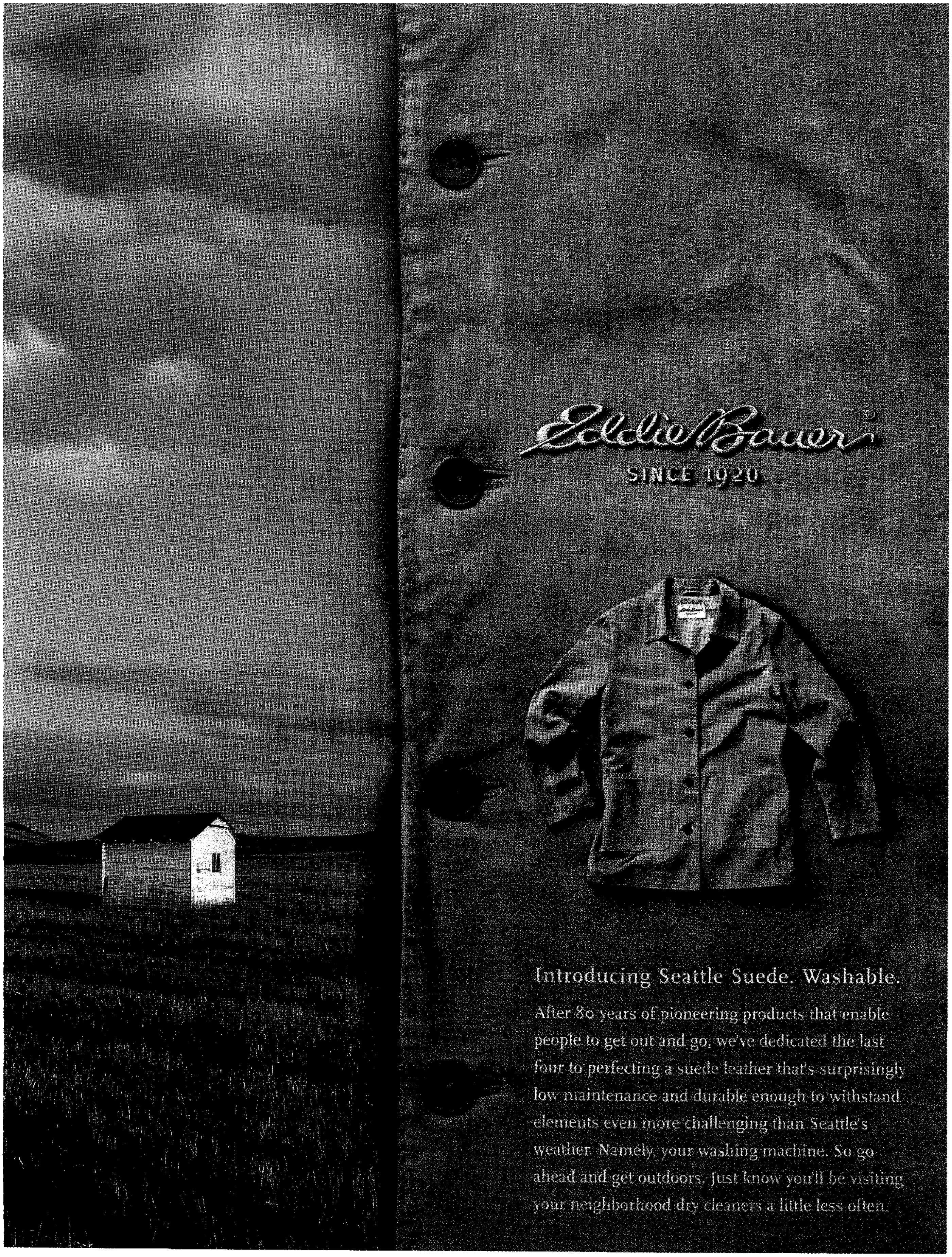

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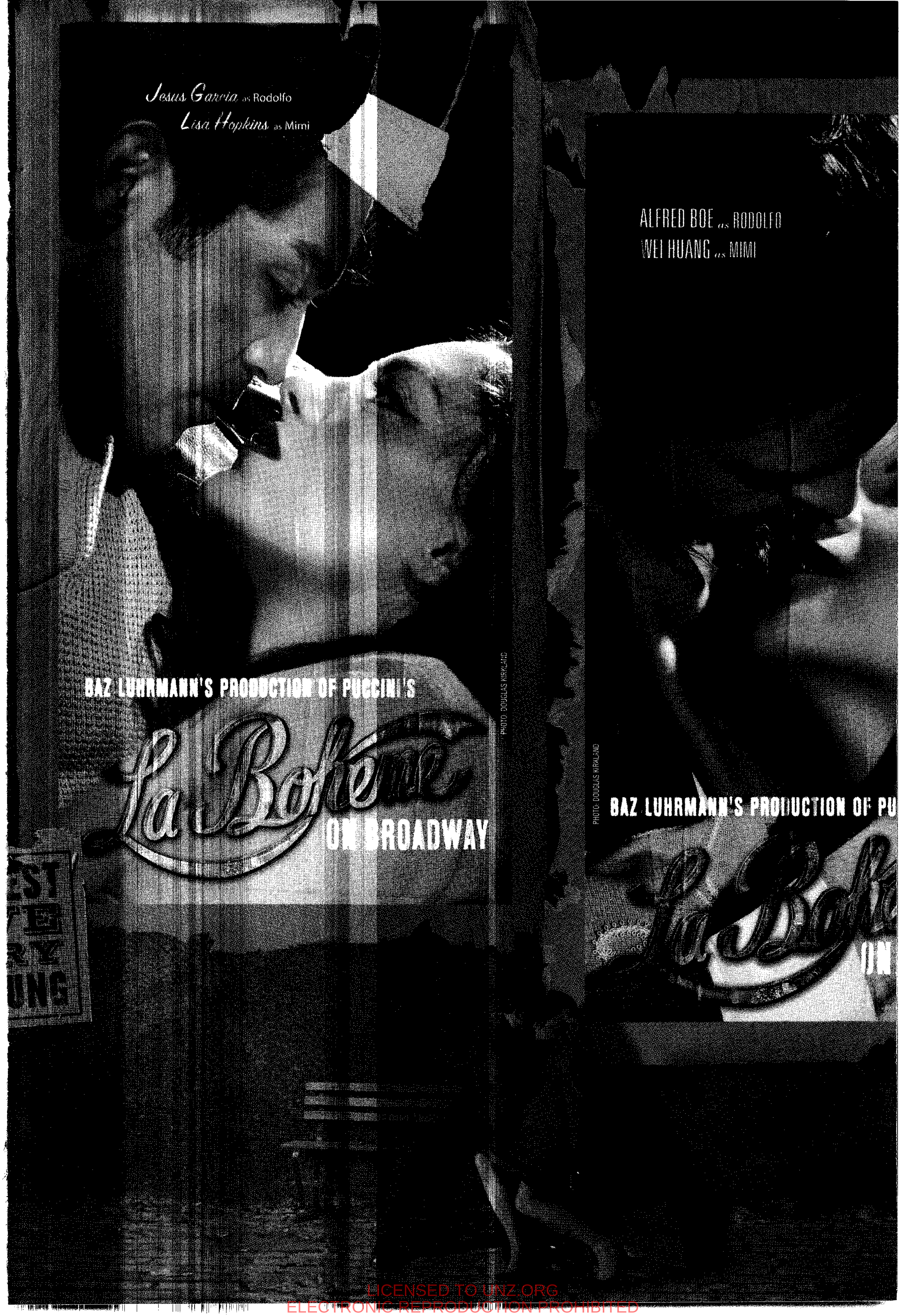
Jesus Garcia as Rodolfo
Lisa Hopkins as Mimi
BAZ LUHRMANN'S PRODUCTION OF PUCCINI'S
La Bohème
ON BROADWAY
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ALFRED BOE as RODOLFO
WEI HUANG as MIMI
PHOTO: DOUGLAS KIRKLAND
BAZ LUHRMANN'S PRODUCTION OF PU
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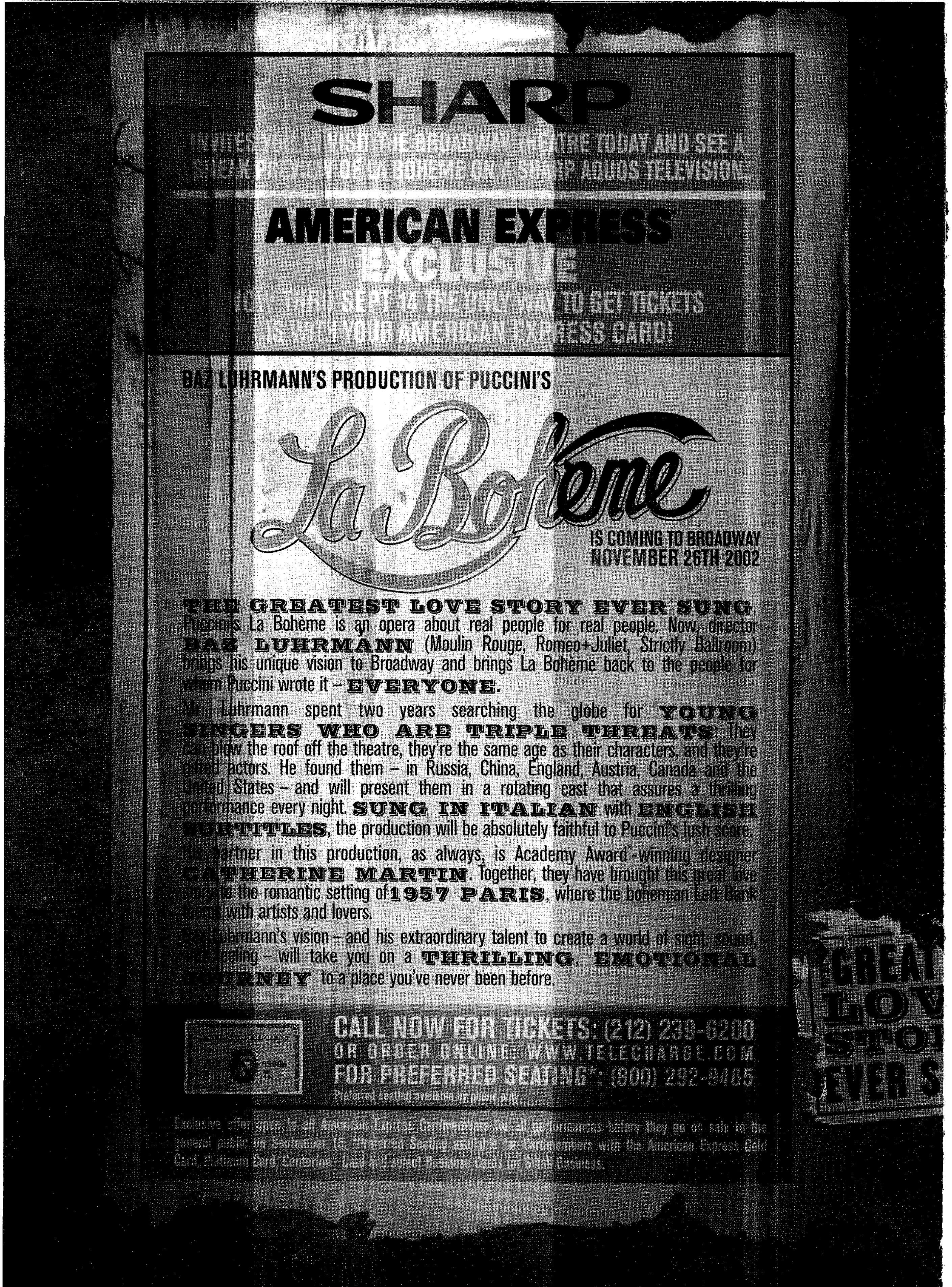

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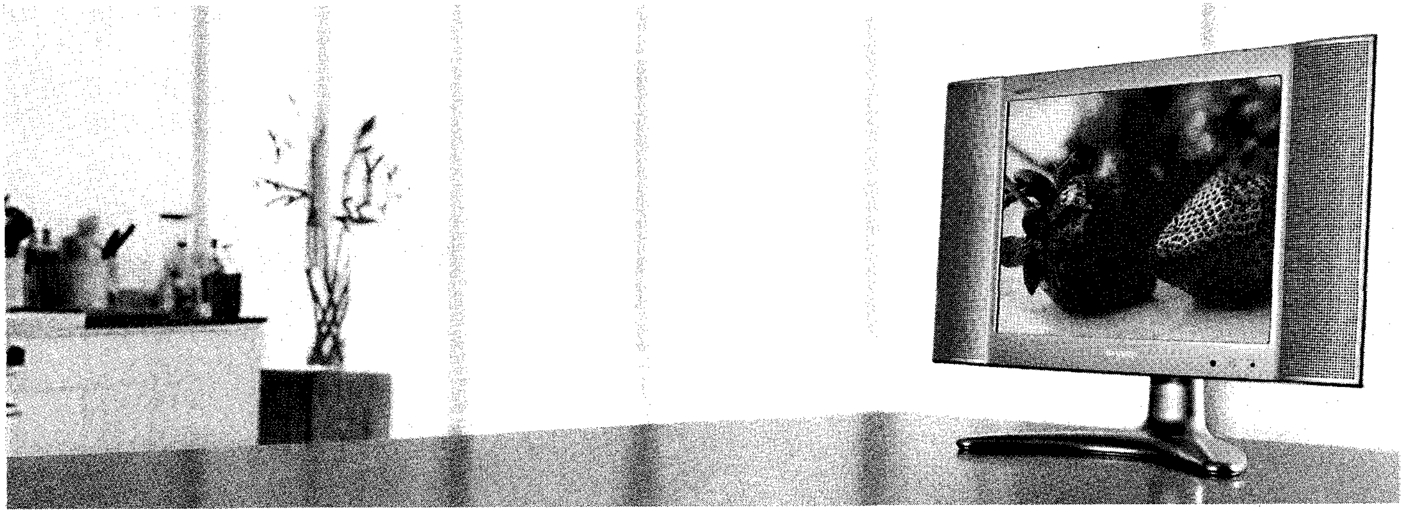

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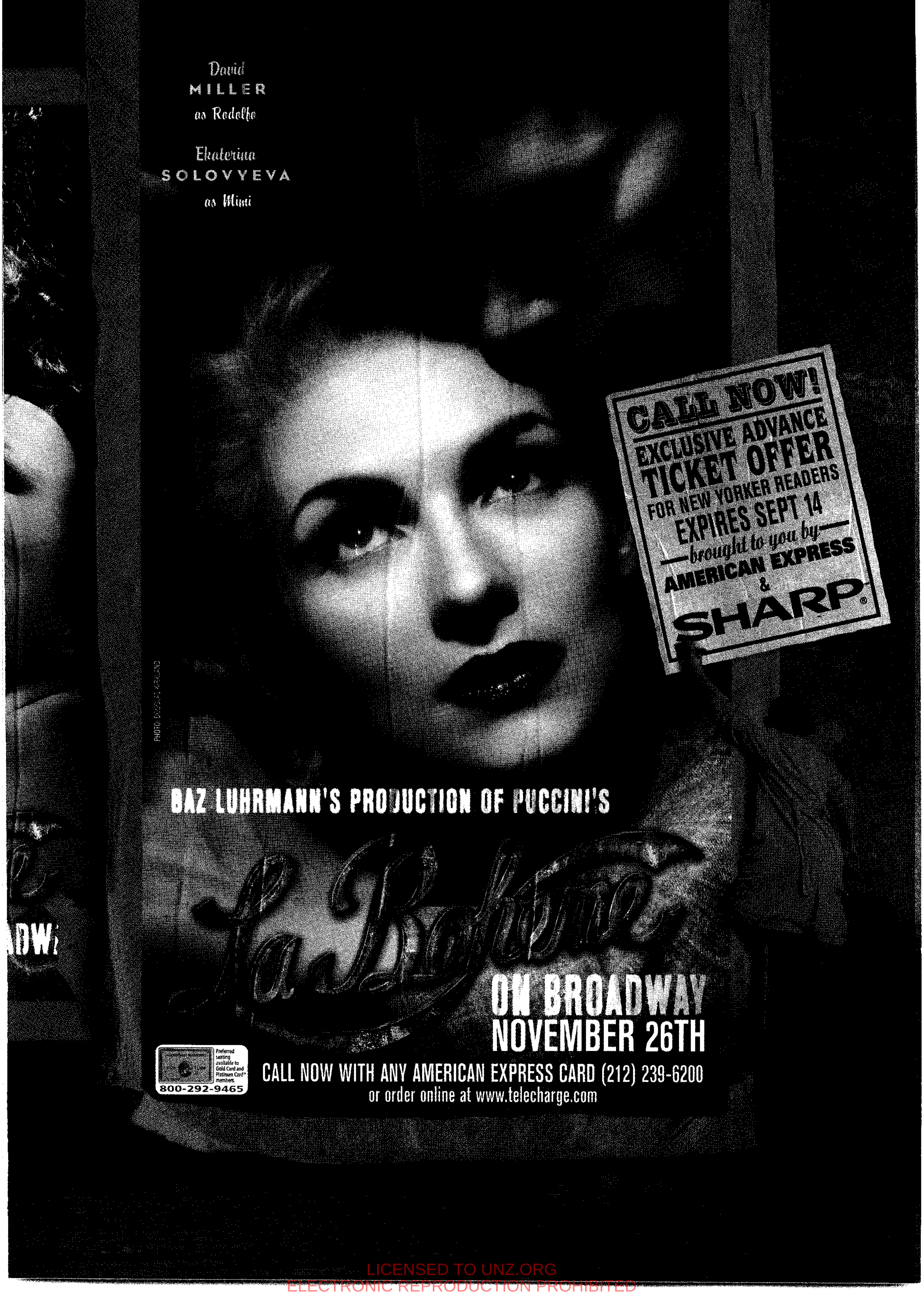

David
MILLER
as Rodolfo

Ekaterina
SOLOVYEVA
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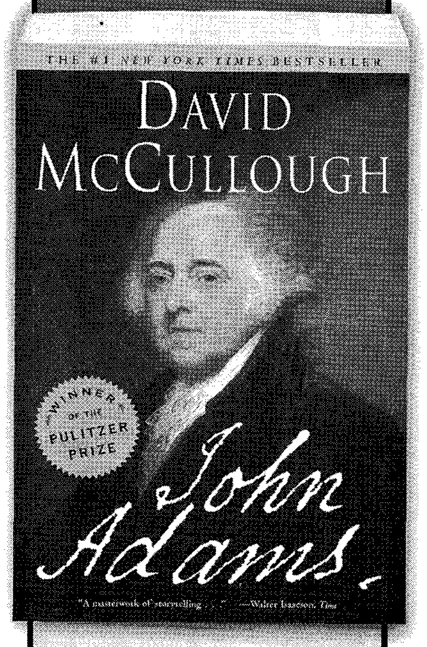
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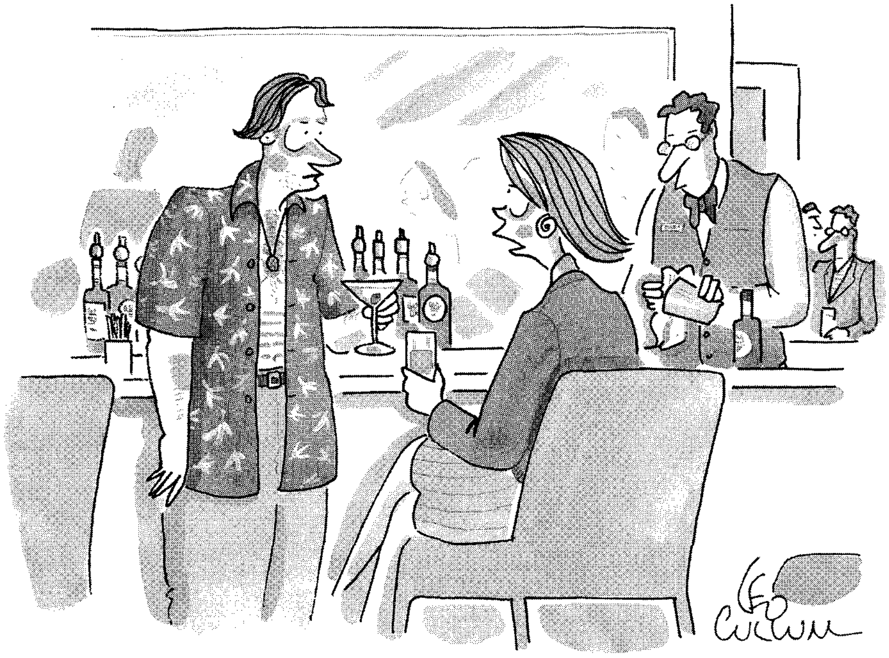

"Please, Jeff. No one shows his abs after Labor Day."

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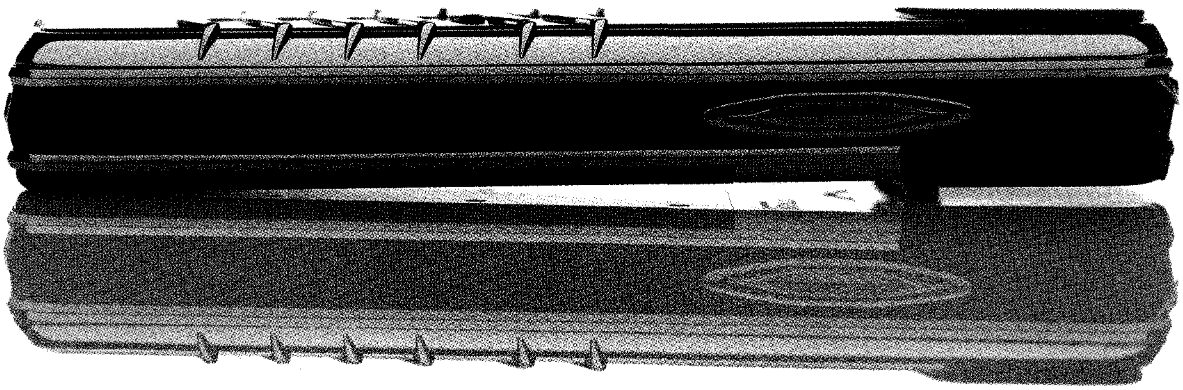

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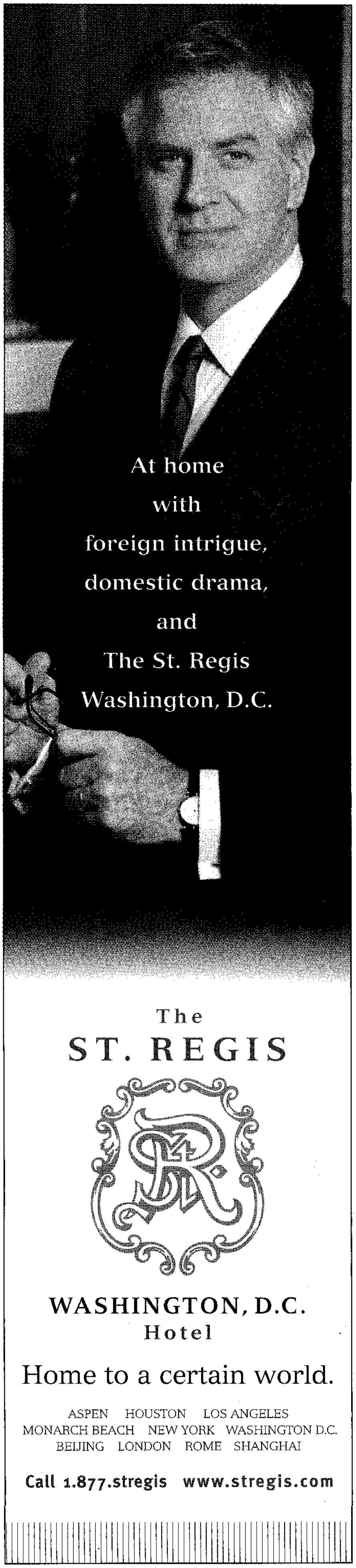
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WHO IS THE AGGRESSOR?

Hendrik Hertzberg is right to ask whether the danger presented by Saddam Hussein is such that war is the "only responsible choice" (The Talk of the Town, August 12th). Missing in all the talk about a preventive strike against Iraq is any reference to the old, perhaps outmoded notion that aggression is an international crime. The Allies in the Second World War were united against Nazi and Japanese aggression. When they organized the United Nations, they wrote a charter authorizing the use of force by member nations only in the face of aggression. Our country has justified most of its military operations after 1945 on the ground, sometimes far-fetched, that its enemies have been "aggressors": the larger Cold War was itself presented as a struggle against "Communist aggression." We went to war against Iraq in the Gulf War with the blessing of a U.N. resolution and a coalition of allies ostensibly because of Iraq's aggression against Kuwait. Now we are threatening to attack Iraq, with or without the imprimatur of the U.N., before the Iraqis have attacked anyone? And we plan to replace the current regime with—what? No doubt Saddam is a brutal ruler, guilty of atrocities against his own people (and against Iran, though he had our support in that war). But such "preventive strikes" by anybody but us would be considered naked aggression.

William N. Turpin
Annapolis, Md.

THE ORIGINAL MR. SOUL

After James Brown recorded his own live performance at the Apollo Theatre in October, 1962, he fought for and eventually won ownership of many of his master tapes. "This was a measure of creative and commercial control that no popular musician, black or white, had quite achieved," Philip Gourevitch writes. ("Mr. Brown," July 29th). In 1959, however, Sam Cooke, the original "Mr. Soul," co-founded his own label, SAR Records, to go with a music-publishing company. His own recordings of hits such as "Twisting the Night Away" and "Chain Gang" were under the control of R.C.A., but he held onto all rights to the songs he wrote, produced, and released for other artists under his label. SAR recorded Bobby Womack, among other soul singers and groups. In pioneering a way to bypass recording giants such as R.C.A., Cooke epitomized artistic independence. He also became a role model for artists both black and white. Cooke's remarkable career was cut short in 1964, when he was shot dead outside a motel at the age of thirty-three. Incidentally, Cooke was at the Apollo that fateful night in 1962. Watching Brown's electrifying performance, Cooke was stunned. He decided he would not be bested by James Brown, and summoned all his musical reserves to prepare for his own appearance, two weeks later. Some people say it was the greatest show Sam Cooke ever gave. One can only wish that Cooke had had Brown's foresight, and had arranged his own recording of his night at the Apollo.

John Erdos
Santa Monica, Calif.

Gourevitch may have been a victim of what he calls "the guttural slipstream" of James Brown's diction. He quotes Brown's description of an audience becoming "so quiet you can hear a rat peelin' cotton." If Gourevitch were, like Brown, from the land of cotton, he would know that cotton is not something one peels. Also, he might then be familiar with the saying "so quiet you can hear a rat *peein'* on cotton." I recall first hearing the expression in my native Tennessee.

Virginia L. Nailling
Austin, Texas

•

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
FALL PREVIEW

THE THEATRE

Which would you rather be? A musical-theatre producer opening a show in the wake of a runaway hit like "Hairspray"? Or a Hollywood star walking the boards in New York, where the crowds are typically kind but the critics can be cruel? Both prospects may sound daunting, but there are plenty of tuners and Tinseltown talent lined up for the fall season.

The comedically adept John Rando, who won a Tony last year for the satirical musical "Urinetown," is directing another spoof, "Dance of the Vampires" (beginning Oct. 14), based on the 1967 Roman Polanski film, "The Fearless Vampire Killers"; it stars one of Broadway's longest-running ghouls, Michael Crawford (a.k.a. the Phantom of the Opera), and has music by Meat Loaf's longtime songwriter Jim Steinman, a guy who knows his bats out of hell. The flamboyant director Baz Luhrmann is coming to Broadway with his postmodern version of Puccini's "La Bohème" (Nov. 26), which he originally staged at the Sydney Opera House in 1990; it has costumes by his wife, Catherine Martin, who dressed the cast of his film "Moulin Rouge" (speaking of casts, this one is in triplicate; three different sets of Mimis and Rodolfos will alternate nights in the spotlight). Lincoln Center is getting into the movie-as-musical business, too, but with subtler stuff: Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), and Lynn Ahrens (lyrics) have adapted the 1994 Albert Finney vehicle "A Man of No Importance" (Sept. 12), which will star Roger Rees and Faith Prince, under the direction of Joe Mantello. There are also a couple of revivals in the works: Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Flower Drum Song" (Sept. 23), which has an updated book by David Henry Hwang and has Lea Salonga leading the cast; and "Man of La Mancha" (Nov. 19), directed by Jonathan Kent and starring the trusty and talented song-and-dance man Brian Stokes Mitchell as Don Quixote, and, as Aldonza, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, returning to the New York stage after seven years.

Among the film stars rushing the stage are Edward Norton and Catherine Keener, who open this month in a revival of Lanford Wilson's "Burn This," the first offering in the Signature Theatre Company's Lanford Wilson season. Amy Irving is doing Ibsen in October, at the Classic Stage Company, where she'll star in "Ghosts." Sigourney Weaver has the lead in a new drama by Neil LaBute, "The Mercy Seat," at MCC in late November. Around the same time, Swoosie Kurtz and Cherry Jones will portray Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy in "Imaginary Friends," Nora Ephron's play about their catty relationship. But the biggest name is still just a rumor, although a persistent one: Al Pacino is reportedly rehearsing for the lead in Bertolt Brecht's "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui," which is being staged by Tony Randall's National Actors Theatre, under the guidance of Theatre de Complicite's director Simon McBurney. (There's a bunch of names you'll probably never hear in the same sentence again.)

Finally, there's some new work by old hands, including "Book of Days," by Lanford Wilson, beginning in October; and "Boston Marriage," by David Mamet, and "Far Away," by Caryl Churchill, both in November. From the kids: a drama about black-on-black racism titled "Yellowman" (Oct. 1), by Dael Orlandersmith; "What Didn't Happen" (Nov. 15), a memory play by the precocious Christopher Shinn; and "The World Over" (Sept. 6), Keith Bunin's "Candide"-like adventure about a young man who believes he's the lost prince of a mythical kingdom.

NIGHT LIFE

The Copacabana, which is returning after a year's hiatus, leads a conga line of new dance clubs into Manhattan this fall. The reborn Copa, which is set to open on Oct. 15 in a rambling fifty-thousand-square-foot converted warehouse on the western end of Thirty-fourth Street, has two dance floors—the main ballroom, which will be home to major Latin orchestras, and a subterranean space featuring disco and house music. The place is so big that on a recent tour the co-owner John Juliano pointed out that the kitchen alone is

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"bigger than most clubs—six thousand square feet."

At Noche, David Emil's Times Square fun house, the affable and well-connected producer Henry Jimenez is looking to bring in the likes of Celia Cruz and Grupo Niche on Saturday nights, when they'll clear out the tables on the second and third floors to make more room for dancing. Performances will start as soon as Emil secures his cabaret license. Johnny Ventura, the King of Merengue, is another candidate to appear at Noche; he celebrates forty-five years in the music industry in a separate concert on Sept. 29-30 at the United Palace Theatre, in upper Manhattan. Ralph Mercado, the proprietor of the Times Square salsa hot spot Babalu, is expanding his offerings with LQ, a bi-level club with a slightly less Latin flavor; it's scheduled to open at the end of October in the East Side space formerly occupied by the country-music club Denim & Diamonds.

A few senior rock acts touch down in Manhattan this fall. The Rolling Stones, once the greatest rock-and-roll band in the world, now one of the grayest, will set out to prove that their advanced age doesn't interfere with their onstage prowess. Touring behind the new collection "Forty Licks," which includes music from all phases of their career, as well as four new songs, the Stones will treat New York to a trio of dates, one in an arena-size venue (Madison Square Garden), one in a stadium (Giants Stadium), and one in a theatre (Roseland Ballroom). The Other Ones, composed of the surviving members of the Grateful Dead, will visit the Garden later in the season, as part of their even longer, even stranger trip. The venerated punk outfit the Mekons celebrate their twenty-fifth anniversary with shows at the Mercury Lounge and CBGB this month. Art work by group members will also be on display in Brooklyn, at Galapagos, starting Sept. 20. The band plays its only New York acoustic set there on opening night. Expect hipsters of all ages to pack one of the most exciting shows of the season: Beck and the Flaming Lips, who come to town next month. It sounds like a fantastic double bill, but it's only a bill and a half; the highly theatrical Lips, known for incorporating everything from puppet shows to animal costumes into their stage act, will open with a set of their own music but will then back Beck, who will be touring behind his new album, "Sea Change."

"Flower Drum Song" (see Theatre).

For live music, Brooklyn has been the place to be for more than a year now, and the trend continues with appearances next month by the seminal Seattle grunge outfit Mudhoney at NorthSix, in Williamsburg, and the Electroclash 2002 tour, which starts at Warsaw on Oct. 11. The headliners include the art-rock collective Chicks on Speed, the libidinous lo-fi rapper Peaches, and the d.j. Larry Tee, who continues to push the New Wave-inspired genre at his weekly parties in nearby Club Luxx. Pete's Candy Store, that endearing pioneer of the Brooklyn scene, presents the neo-folkie singer Martha Wainwright on Sept. 14. And the under-represented borough of Queens hosts the New York World Festival, a three-day event devoted to the music of the Mediterranean: dozens of performers from places like Greece, Morocco, Algeria, and Croatia will crowd into the Bohemian Hall & Beer Garden in Astoria for concerts, panels, and workshops.

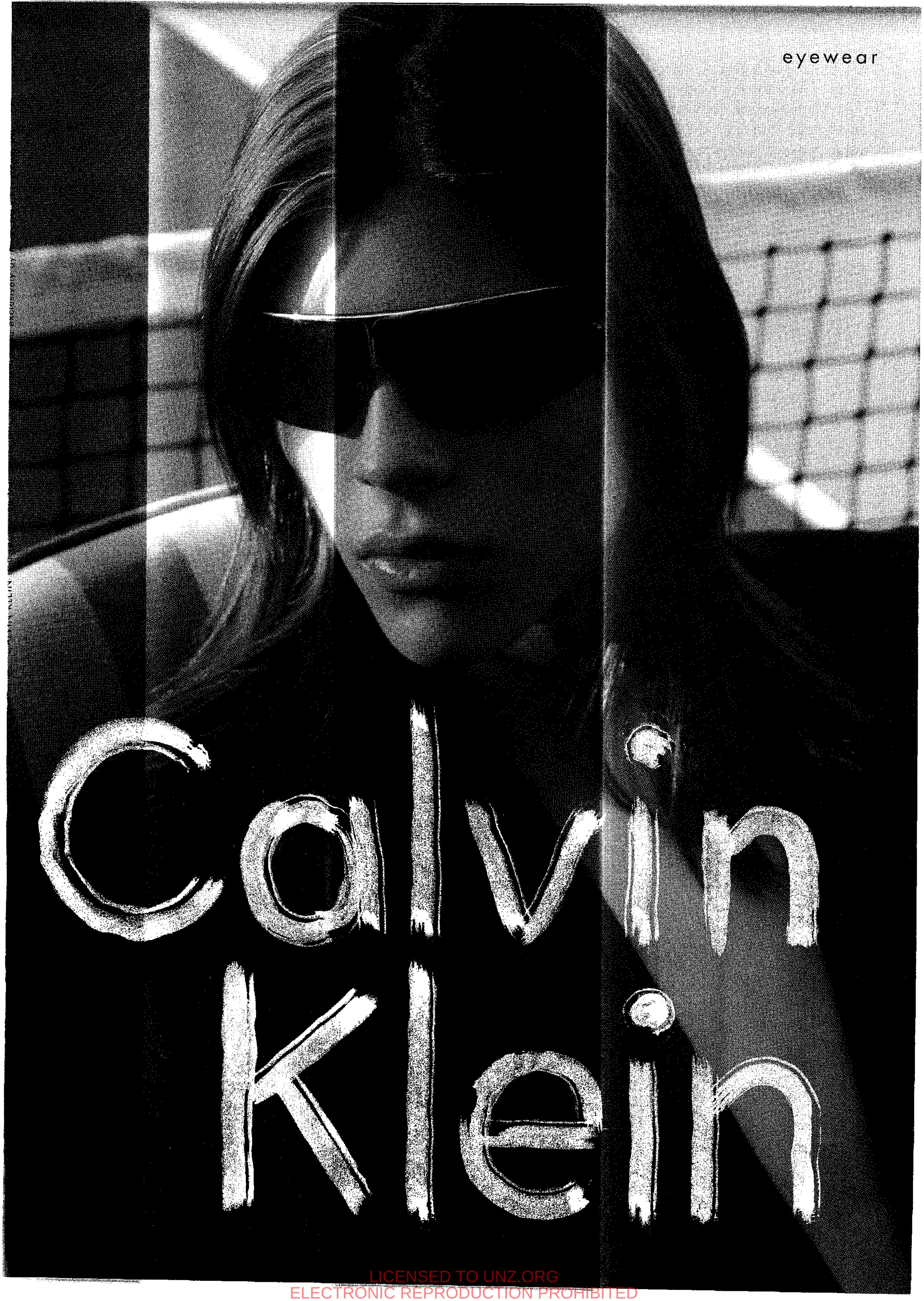
In the jazz world, the piano claims center stage. The Jazz Standard brings in five of today's most important pianists during the "Verizon in the Clubs" series: Ethan Iverson, Fred Hersch, Vijay Iyer, Matthew Shipp, and Jason Moran take their turns starting on Sept. 17. The fleet-fingered Eric Reed directs the "Jazz Composer Portraits" series at Columbia University's Miller Theatre, bringing in his big band to pay tribute to Billy Strayhorn on Sept. 20-21. Later in the season, Reed and friends perform the works of two less venerated but equally deserving musicians: Ben Wolfe and Donald Brown. Downtown, at the Village Vanguard, the keyboard gets an ongoing workout as Bill Charlap (Sept. 10-15), the Cuban virtuoso Chucho Valdés (Oct. 8-13), and Jason Moran (Nov. 26-Dec. 1) stop by in quick succession. And finally, Sweet Basil, the Greenwich Village club that closed last year, will reopen as Sweet Rhythm, a new venue at the same Seventh Avenue South location. While Sweet Basil was exclusively devoted to jazz, Sweet Rhythm will have more eclectic tastes: the club's owners promise to book acts ranging from pop to world music to rock.

The Copacabana reopens in October.

ART

The plastic wineglasses are just now being raised at the first fall openings, and already we can spot a theme: "Exposed: The Victorian Nude," opening Friday at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, will display some hundred and fifty classic examples of the British altogether, including Edwin Landseer's "Godiva," Frederic Leighton's "The Bath of Psyche," Lewis Carroll's photographs of nude children, and John William Waterhouse's image of the incongruously bare-chested teen-age martyr "Saint Eulalia." The galleries are countering with more recent artistic renderings of the Anglo-Saxon at ease. Tracy Emin, who has lately been writing travel columns (which read like sex columns) for British *GQ*, returns to making art about her sex life (opening Sept. 21

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT RISKO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at Lehmann Maupin). And for a show called "The Passion," opening at Matthew Marks that same day, the London photographer Sam Taylor-Wood, taking inspiration from Japanese erotic woodcuts, follows a couple and documents their intimate life.

Two one-man museum shows—a full-fledged retrospective (opening this month) and a mid-career survey (just in time for Halloween)—bring contrary artists to the city walls. The Met's "Richard Avedon: Portraits" collects iconic images of the country's most influential figures, taken from the forties to the present, and places them alongside portraits of humbler folk, such as cowboys, drifters, and inmates of an institution for the mentally ill. And the New Museum gives the equally influential but more overtly wicked Carroll Dunham a chance to bring a swarm of his anarchic gun-toting phallus-headed doodles to SoHo.

Tracy Emin at Lehmann Maupin.

The Pace Wildenstein gallery, at its two locations, has a Murderers' Row lineup this fall: Georg Baselitz, Robert Ryman, and Chuck Close in Chelsea; Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd, and Jim Dine uptown. But the younger generation of painters answers with the animal glories of Walton Ford, at Kasmin, and the inscrutably personable bio-blobs of Inka Essenhigh, at 303, in October and November, respectively. Nina Bovasso, whose drawings of wee dots and cosmic splatters have been the sole glory of many a group show, returns for a solo turn at the intimate Clementine in October. And Thomas Hirschhorn, a constant presence on the international circuit, makes his New York début in November with a cavelike installation at Barbara Gladstone.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

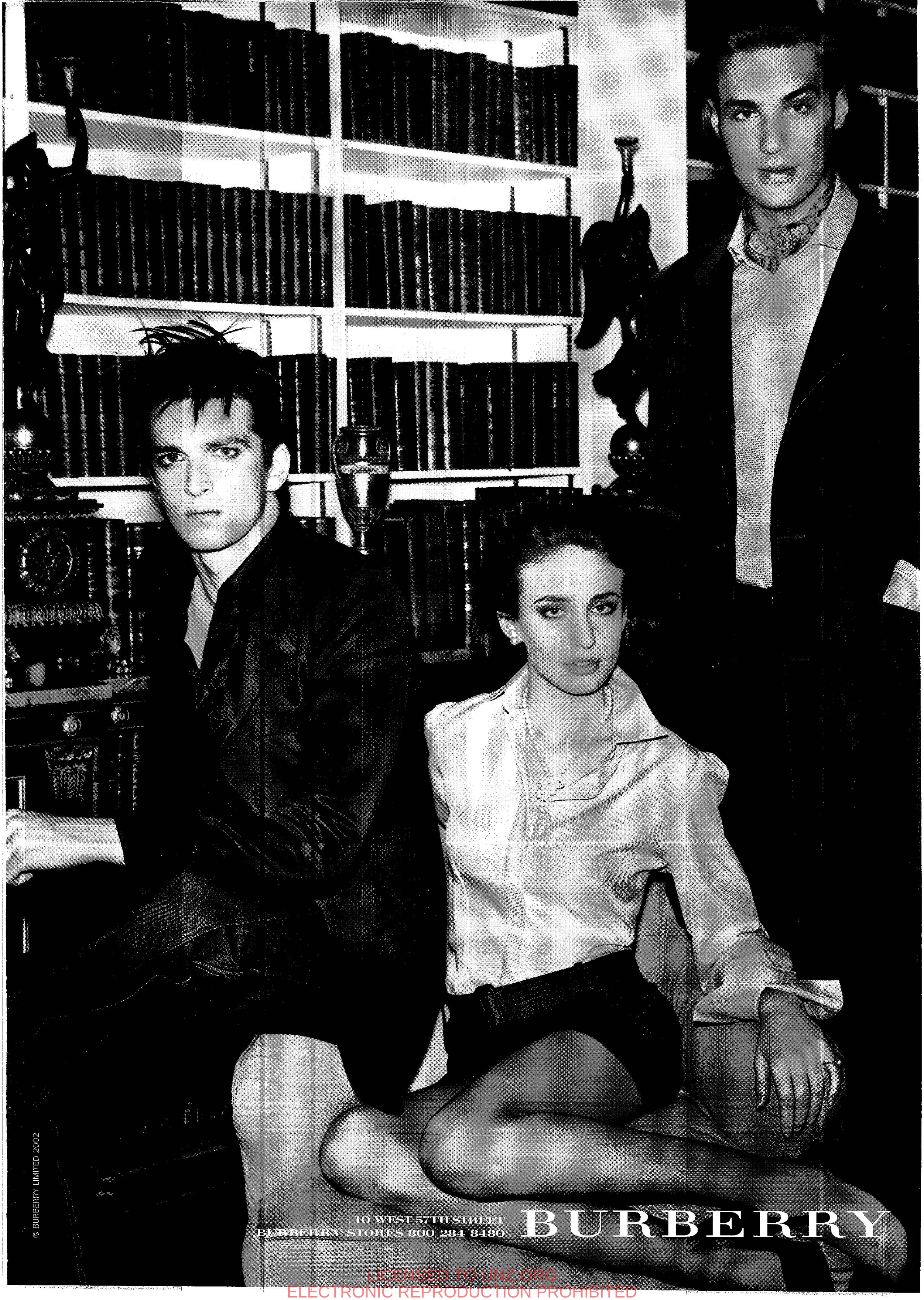
No one has his finger on the pulse of New York's new-music scene more surely than George Steel, the intrepid executive director of Columbia University's Miller Theatre, and the consistency of his taste is a reassurance in uncertain times. Jennifer Koh's violin recital on Dec. 5 may arrive near the bitter end of the fall schedule, but its title, "New York Hardcore" (an evening of Steve Reich, Elliott Carter, Charles Wuorinen, John Zorn, and Ornette Coleman), could serve as a theme for the whole season, which will celebrate the combination of downtown and uptown composers that gives the Miller its mojo. (The "Composer Portraits" series, the heart of the Miller schedule, begins on Oct. 19 with three premières by David Lang.) But the fall's new-music standout takes place at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on Nov. 1-2, where the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the Schola Cantorum of Caracas perform the New York première of Osvaldo Golijov's "La Pasión Según San Marcos," a raucous, mystifying work that has already acquired iconic status. Dawn Upshaw is the soprano soloist; Robert Spano conducts.

BAM's Next Wave Festival features the New York première (on Oct. 1) of "Galileo Galilei," the latest of Philip Glass's historical pageants, with Mary Zimmerman as librettist (assisted by Glass and the redoubtable Arnold Weinstein) and the spunky Eos Orchestra spinning out the composer's endless, flowing lines. The Met boasts its own endless melody in the ageless form of Plácido Domingo, who once again will launch the season by singing whole acts from three operas ("Fedora," "Samson et Dalila," and "Otello") in the Opening Night Gala on Sept. 23. (Mirella Freni, Olga Borodina, and Renée Fleming are his leading ladies.) City Opera opens Sept. 10 with a welcome new production of Puccini's "Il Trittico" (rarely staged in its entirety), followed by the New York première of Jake Heggie's "Dead Man Walking," on Sept. 13. The opera's libretto, by Terrence McNally (based on the book), may be potent stuff, but how the music will fare without the opera's original stars, Susan Graham and Frederica von Stade, is an open question.

Two of Lincoln Center's Great Performers concerts showcase the virtues of long experience: José van Dam brings his supple voice and suave intelligence to Schubert's "Winterreise" on Oct. 24, and on Nov. 3 Michel Plasson conducts his Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse (featuring a solo turn from the soprano Natalie Dessay), which he's made into a paragon of French style over thirty glorious years. The always restless Gidon Kremer, on the other hand, offers a Carnegie Hall concert on Oct. 28 with his vibrant young chamber orchestra, Kremerata Baltica, in which he'll make a bold claim for the forgotten music of the great Romanian composer-virtuoso George Enescu; music by Mahler, Schubert, and Hartmann follows the next evening. The Carnegie season begins grandly on Oct. 2, with Daniel Barenboim, in the first of three concerts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducting a program of Falla and Ravel; the conductor-pianist returns to the hall on Oct. 14 to accompany Angela Denoke and Thomas Quasthoff, both making their Carnegie Hall recital débuts, in Wolf's "Italian Songbook," the intimate jewel box of a cycle that, for many, is the apogee of the German lied.

Golijov's "St. Mark Passion," at BAM.

But perhaps the most anticipated début of the season is Lorin Maazel's assumption of the New York Philharmonic's podium, which takes place on Sept. 18 with Beethoven's Ninth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Symphony. (In the rest of the week's concerts, he'll also conduct "On the Transmigration of Souls," a new work by John Adams commissioned in memory of those who lost their lives on September 11th.) Maazel has always been a maestro of intellectual flash and technical élan, but no American conductor enjoys a reputation at once so exalted and insecure. Now, at seventy-two, he has inherited a position once held by such men as Bernstein and Mahler—is the audition finally over?

Greg Kinnear in "Auto Focus."

MOVIES

Hannibal Lecter, watch your back. The carnivorous doctor (a.k.a. Anthony Hopkins) returns this fall in "Red Dragon," directed by Brett Ratner, but the real scare of the season may be "The Ring," a remake of a Japanese horror movie about a videotape: after people watch it, they die a sudden, horrible death exactly one week later. Moviegoers will hope to avoid a similar experience in the coming months, when Hollywood releases its prestige pictures and holiday fare. As usual, there's a bumper crop of sequels, but the surprising nature of this season's films can be summed up with the following improbable sentence: Eminem and Adam Sandler are potential Oscar nominees.

The Detroit hip-hopper makes his big-screen début in "8 Mile," directed by Curtis Hanson ("L.A. Confidential," "Wonder Boys"). The concept of a movie about a white rapper may bring up unfortunate memories of Vanilla Ice, but Eminem's music suggests that he knows how to act up, and he has a worthy onscreen adversary in Brittany Murphy, who plays his girlfriend and muse. Adam Sandler appears in Paul Thomas Anderson's "Punch-Drunk Love," where he wins the affections of Emily Watson. The crowd at Cannes loved the odd-couple pairing and the film's slanted humor. With the help of Anderson, Sandler melted critical hearts with a role that's a lot like one he might play in his own comedies: a man obsessed with pudding who vents his rage through phone sex.

What really seems to get studios hot and bothered, year after year, is plain old books. The most ambitious adaptation is "Adaptation," directed by Spike Jonze and written by Charlie and Donald Kaufman. The metastory-within-a-story concerns a writer (Nicolas Cage) struggling to adapt Susan Orlean's "The Orchid Thief." The real sleight-of-hand artist may be the playwright David Hare, who managed to pull a script out of Michael Cunningham's chronologically complex novel "The Hours"; Nicole Kidman stars as Virginia Woolf. Not to be overlooked are two book-based sequels that will be seen by just about everyone but orcs and Muggles: the second "Lord of the Rings" film, "The Two Towers," and "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets."

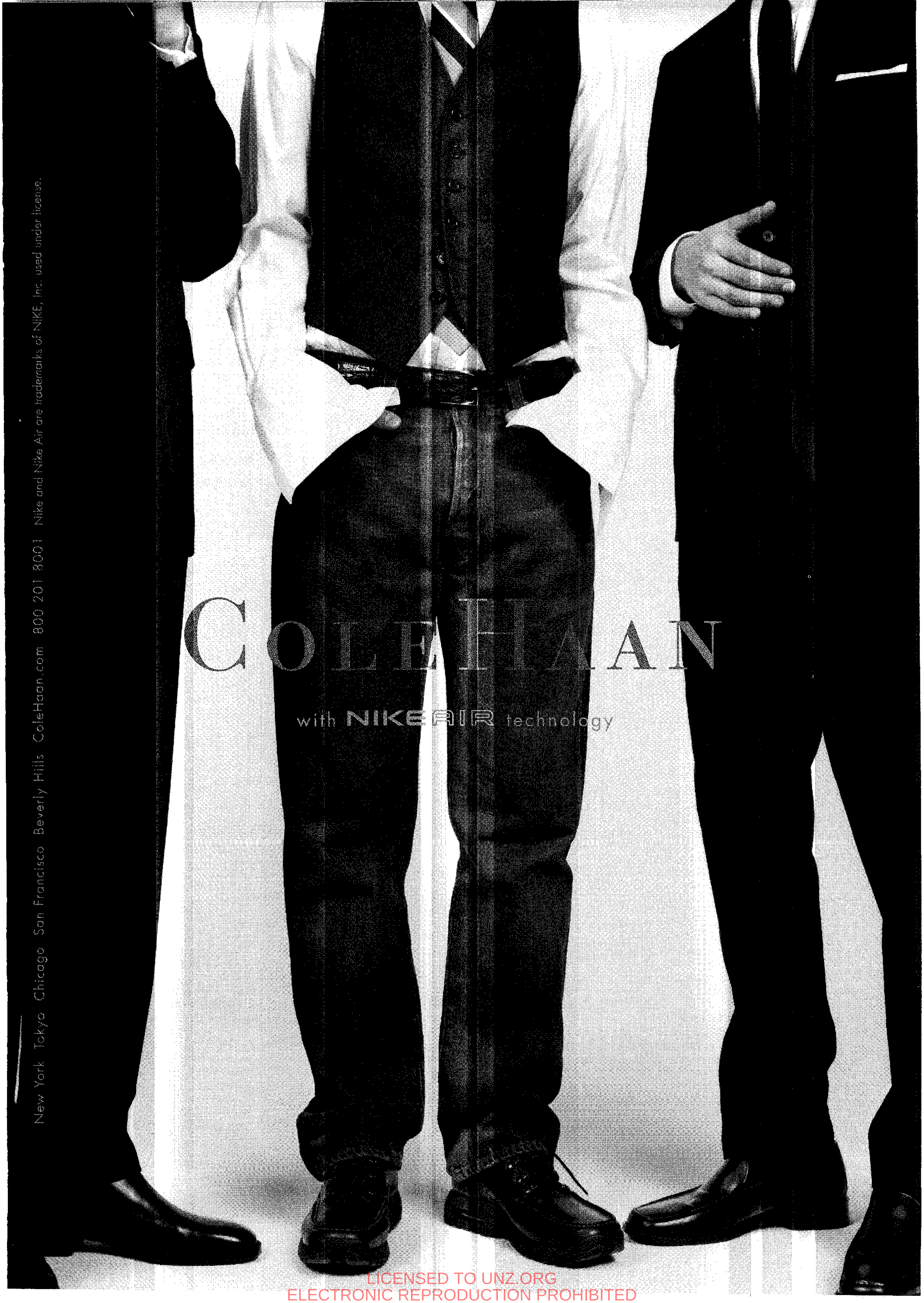
The darkest movies of the fall arrive from a normally sunny place: sitcom television. The writer-director Brad Silberling cast Dustin Hoffman and Susan Sarandon in "Moonlight Mile," which Silberling wrote after his girlfriend, the "My Sister Sam" actress Rebecca Schaeffer, was murdered by a deranged fan. Darker still is Paul Schrader's "Auto Focus," a bio-pic about Bob Crane, whom most people remember as the chipper American prisoner of war on "Hogan's Heroes." When Crane wasn't outsmarting Colonel Klink, he was making X-rated home videos, and his brutal 1978 murder remains unsolved. The actor Greg Kinnear takes on Crane's descent into celebrity's lower depths.

Yes, James Bond is back, turning forty with "Die Another Day," and Owen Wilson teams up with Eddie Murphy in a rehash of "I Spy." More fun fluff will arrive like clockwork until Christmas, when Oscar seriousness takes over the town, led by duelling Leo films. DiCaprio stars in both Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York" and Steven Spielberg's "Catch Me If You Can." In one, he's an Irish street fighter, in the other, he's a legendary con artist. Let the games begin.

Moving carefully among the icebergs are some promising smaller productions, such as "Far from Heaven," Todd Haynes's tribute to the master of sombre Hollywood kitsch, Douglas Sirk, and "Phone Booth," an experiment directed by Joel Schumacher involving Colin Farrell and a telephone. Salma Hayek is already gathering acclaim for playing the iconic Mexican painter Frida Kahlo in "Frida," directed by Julie Taymor. New Yorkers can mark their calendars for early looks at Alexander Payne's "About Schmidt" (starring Jack Nicholson) and Pedro Almodóvar's "Talk to Her," which, respectively, screen on the opening and closing nights of the New York Film Festival in late September.

For revivals, it seems to be the season of Tarkovsky, the unorthodox and poetic Russian director who would have turned seventy this year. Walter Reade has a complete retrospective, and Film Forum will show extended runs of "Andrei Rublev" and "Solaris." And, while MOMA's art may have decamped to Queens, its film department will set up shop on Oct. 11 at the Gramercy Theatre on Twenty-third Street. Yet another good place (and good excuse) to spend time in the dark.

Salma Hayek in "Frida."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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BRAVE NEW WORLD
A marathon of fifty new plays and songs—written and performed by artists including Sarah Jessica Parker, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Keitel, Peter Gallagher, Jerry Herman, Jules Feiffer, Arthur Laurents, Mercedes Ruehl, Lynn Ahrens, and Stephen Flaherty—commemorating the anniversary of September 11, 2001. Sept. 9-11. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

BURN THIS
Catherine Keener and Edward Norton lead the cast in a Signature Theatre Company revival of Lanford Wilson's 1987 drama, about three New Yorkers in the aftermath of a mutual friend's accidental death. James Houghton is the director. In previews. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

ROMAN NIGHTS
The long friendship between Tennessee Williams and Anna Magnani is the subject of a new play by Franco D'Alessandro. Previews begin Sept. 7. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

TAKE ME OUT
From London's Donmar Warehouse, a new play by Richard Greenberg, in which a heroic baseball player comes out to the press. Joe Mantello is the director. Preview on Sept. 4. Opens Sept. 5 at 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

THREE-CORNERED MOON
A Keen Company revival of Gertrude Tonkonogy's 1933 comedy, about a crazy Brooklyn family dealing with life during the Depression. Previews Sept. 6-7. Opens Sept. 8 at 5 and runs through Sept. 29. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 560-7284.)

THE WORLD OVER
Playwrights Horizons kicks off the season with a new play by Keith Bunin, about a young man who believes he is the lost prince of a mythical kingdom. Previews begin Sept. 6. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE
This Roundabout Theatre revival of the 1938 Rodgers and Hart comedy based on Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" has a new book by Nicky Silver, based on George Abbot's original script—and something has been lost in translation. Rather than perked up, the show feels freighted by the update. Scott Ellis's direction and the costumes, by Martin Pakledinaz, have Looney Tunes written all over them. The resulting hybrid of humor brings to mind the broad, silly, knowing farce that Carol Burnett's company patented in the seventies, which hasn't aged well, either. Rodgers and Hart's songs are timeless, and the game cast renders them well, but that's still not a good enough reason to sit through everything else. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
In the Aquila Theatre Company's excellent production of Shakespeare's intricately foolish story, the laughs are many and the delights deep. The seven cast members, led here by Mark Saturno and Louis Butelli as the two sets of twins, mix remarkable range with insane energy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

ENDPAPERS
The first full-length play by Thomas McCormack, the retired C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house (St. Martin's), about choosing a successor as C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house, is highly literate (imagine: grammar jokes!) and full of zingy one-liners. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

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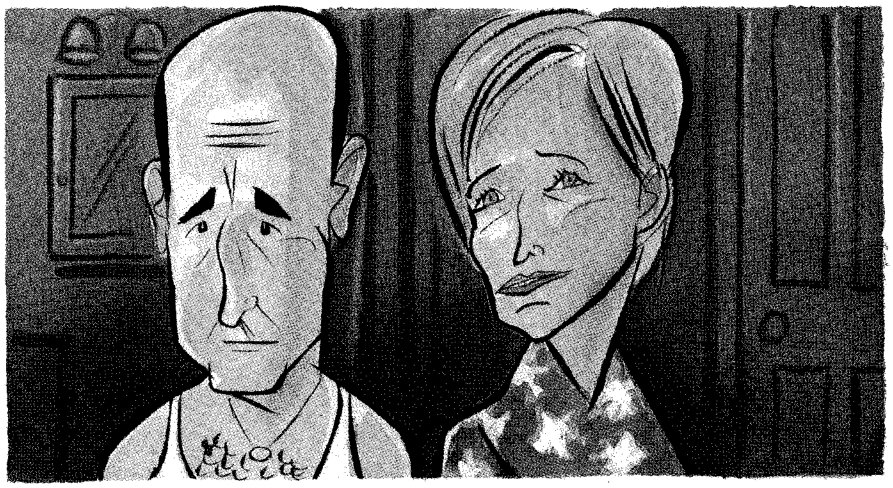
FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
The brilliant Edie Falco's star turn in Terence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and woman marginalized by life while struggling to embrace it is the best reason to see this derivative work, which owes a great deal to William Inge. She's an over-forty waitress who once dreamed of being an actress; Johnny (Stanley Tucci) is the hyperkinetic cook at the restaurant where Frankie works. He wants children, she's afraid of commitment. Unfortunately, McNally exploits Inge's weakest traits as a writer—corny exposition, faulty psychological reasoning—and turns the volume up high on them. The play is a surface crowd-pleaser, and Tucci's strident surface charm works perfectly with it, but Falco's steady reasonableness, even in Frankie's moments of panic, shows up both Tucci and the play. With this performance, she joins the ranks of Laurette Taylor and Shirley Booth: great American actresses who garner audience sympathy through lyrical naturalism. Joe Mantello is the director. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production, starring Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson, is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/15/02.) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



Stanley Tucci and Edie Falco, in "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune."

MARCELLUS HALL

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain who lost eight of his men on September 11th and an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives—and an admirable tribute to the men who died. (The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.)

HAIRSPRAY
This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie, with a book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan, a score by Marc Shaiman, and lyrics by Shaiman and Scott Wittman, takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. David Rockwell's sets and William Ivey Long's costumes combine and highlight the period artifacts in an ecstasy of gorgeous bad taste, offered with just enough invention to achieve lyrical wit. What the show is parodying was trivial to begin with, so the parodies don't sting—they're not meant to. Instead they break free into some goofy new realm of pop Dada. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother Edna Turnblad, a housewife who takes in laundry but who gets to appear, at the climax of the show, in flaming pink. Jack O'Brien is the director. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

HARLEM SONG
Essentially a revue, using both old and new compositions, selected or written by the director George C. Wolfe and the show's talented music supervisors, Zane Mark and Daryl Waters. It has no dialogue to speak of—or, at least, no dialogue that contributes significantly to the plot or helps to convey the time line framing the show's eleven sections, each of which marks a particular moment in the neighborhood's social history ("The Harlem Renaissance," "La Imigración," "The Depression," and so on). Like Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" and the novels of Terry McMillan, it is a form of art whose aesthetic concerns are secondary to its desire to make "the people" feel good, about themselves and their community. The Harlem of "Harlem Song" is not an urban wasteland in the process of reinventing itself. It is a realm of legend and lore, and a mythical homeland, which it is our duty as theatregoers, as citizens, to celebrate. This is a point worth making, but not one that bears much repeating. And since there is little factual detail to support this portrayal, "Harlem Song" degenerates rather swiftly into propaganda. We see the neighborhood's fabulous past, and we hope for its fabulous future, all without quite knowing how Harlem became Harlem in the first place. (8/19 & 26/02) (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

I'M NOT RAPPAPORT
Judd Hirsch is the main attraction in this revival of Herb Gardner's 1985 play, as he revisits the role of an unregenerate Jewish Socialist geezer, who complicates the life of his foil on the park bench, an aging Upper West Side super, nimbly played by Ben Vereen. There's plenty of shtick here—at one point, posing as a lawyer, Hirsch might as well be wearing Groucho glasses—but, under the guidance of Daniel Sullivan, who directed the original Broadway production, the routines of this shuffling duo transcend vaudeville and gather poignancy as they go. Who would have thought that the Central Park of 1982, with its muggers and other dangers, would come so soon to feel like Old New York? (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairy-tale-derived musical isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about

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learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. The archetypal material is treated with suitable directness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

JOE
In Richard Maxwell's new play, six actors portray the title character at different stages in his life. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

JOHN MORAN W/EVA MÜLLER
The techno-opera composer and the German dancer and choreographer team up to perform excerpts from Moran's earlier works, which have included "Jack Benny!," "Everyday Newt Burman," and "Mathew in the School of Life." Sundays at 7:30, through Sept. 15. (Galapagos Art Space, 70 N. 6th St., between Kent and Wythe Sts., Brooklyn. 718-384-4586.)

Bad Wizard descends upon the Mercury Lounge (see Night Life—Clubs).

ZOHAR LAZAR

METAMORPHOSES
Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool. The production is fun and full of wonder, but it illustrates rather than dramatizes psychic struggle. The show's gimmick, the pool, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set. But technique, which can make a show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD
J. M. Synge's classic 1907 comedy about a young man lionized by a remote Irish village after he shows up in their midst with a story of having killed his abusive father—and the fallout when the father shows up only slightly bloodied. The show explores issues of reputation, love, lust, and the thrill of scandal in a surprisingly modern way, and in remarkably beautiful language. The Irish Rep cast is strong, especially Aedin Moloney, as a lonely widow. Kirk Bookman's warm lighting makes the most of David Raphael's detailed stone-cottage set. Directed by Charlotte Moore with a sure hand. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Sept. 8.)

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled. Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Just like the 1967 movie it's based on, this musical is supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.

NOISES OFF
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. (Closes Sept. 15.)

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
The company performs "Gloria" and "V." The program also features Morris himself in the solo "Peccadillos," which is his usual odd, wise mix of incongruities—here, jaded randiness, childlike vulnerability, and galumphing suffering. (Evening Stars Music and Dance Series, Battery Park, State St. at Battery Pl. Sept. 9 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

"BIRD BRAIN"
"I wanted to dance the length of Manhattan, but for now, I'll settle for a smaller chunk," says Jennifer Monson about the mini-migration she and three other bird-emulating dancers will make along the city's streets this week. Monson, who thought of becoming an environmental scientist before experimental dance swept her up, is on the second leg of an ambitious five-year tour that follows the navigational paths of particular birds and beasts up and down coasts and continents (one animal and route per year through 2005), with stops along the way for the dancers to imagine themselves—via a wildly complex system of metaphorical associations that the choreographer has devised—as the animal in question. This season, the designated creature is the osprey, "a super-cosmopolitan bird," Monson says, which is currently making its way from Maine to Venezuela, with stopovers in New York and Havana. "There is something quixotic and ridiculous," she says, "about these teeny birds making such huge journeys every year. But in a certain way, they hold the earth together." (Sept. 5-10. For times and locations, call 375-8283 or visit www.birdbraindance.org.)

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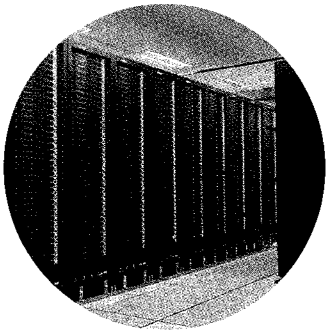

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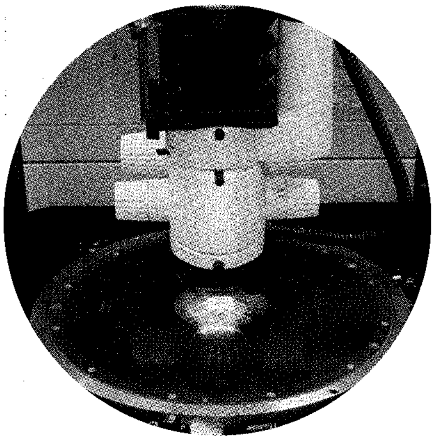

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
Making guitar rock safe for the new millennium, this California outfit leavens its power chords with the occasional steel drum. Also on the bill is **And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead.** The volatile Texan combo matches the sinister flamboyance of its moniker with performances often punctuated by end-of-set violence. While one might crassly suggest that the Who's Pete Townshend was doing this years before these little punks were born, the band has still managed to capture the imagination of a new generation of excitement-starved rock fans. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Sept. 5 at 7:30.)

LUTHER VANDROSS
For many years, this soul crooner has been the model of consistency and inconsistency: consistency for the quality and passion of his vocal performances, and inconsistency for his up-and-down weight. His most recent album, a self-titled set for Clive Davis's J Records, was released last year. (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. Sept. 6 at 7.)

NEW YORK SALSA FESTIVAL
In 1962, the Puerto Rican pianist Rafael Ithier put together **El Gran Combo,** and four decades after its first humble show in a San Juan hotel, the orchestra has become perhaps the best-known ambassadors of salsa, thanks to the leader's tireless devotion and a healthy sense of humor. El Gran Combo celebrates its fortieth anniversary with the help of the legendary singer **Andy Montañez** (who was a member of the Combo from its founding through 1977 and who has recorded some thirty albums with the band) and with the singer **Gilberto Santa Rosa. Tito Rojas** and his orchestra open the evening. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Sept. 7 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

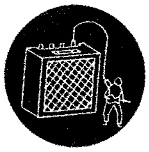
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Sept. 3-4: The incendiary bluesman **Buddy Guy** turned sixty-six this year, but don't worry about his retiring. His live shows are fierce rebellions against the passage of time. With **T-Model Ford,** one of the last surviving original Mississippi bluesmen. Sept. 6: A night of Jamaican rhythms with the **Wailers.**

BLARNEY STAR
43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Sept. 6: The great Uilleann Pipes player **Paddy Keenan** and the County Kerry singer and guitarist **Tommy O'Sullivan** mark the seasonal return of traditional Irish music here on Friday nights.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 4: **Chip Taylor,** the legendary songwriter whose credits include "Wild Thing" and "Angel of the Morning," has a brand new record, "Let's Leave This Town," which finds him working with a talented young fiddler and singer named **Carrie Rodriguez.** After spending a decade as a professional gambler, Taylor returned to the music business with a tour in 1993 and a 1996 comeback album, "Hit Man." With Taylor and Rodriguez playing together like John Prine and Iris DeMent, the new album seals the deal on Taylor's welcome return.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 4: Evoking the progressive strain of Peter Gabriel-era Genesis (sans the silly outfits, haircuts, and war paint), England's **Elbow** practice a lush, melodic brand of expansive and emotive pop. Sept. 6: The **Walkmen.** Formed from the ashes of the short-lived but once hotly name-dropped Jonathan Fire*Eater, this local outfit explores the same sophisto-garage-rock turf as their predecessors, augmenting the formula with a tinkly upright piano and Hamilton Leithauser's melodramatic vocals. The Chicago label Thrill Jockey, known for its eclectic sampling of independent musicians of all persuasions, celebrates its tenth anniversary with a show here and two nights at Irving Plaza. On Sept. 7 the chief attractions include **Freakwater,** which is centered on the duo of Catherine Irwin and Janet Bean. Over the course of their recorded career the pair have moved steadily from a croaky Appalachian sound toward full and swelling country music. They're paired with **The Sea and Cake,** the vehicle of the Windy City stalwart Sam Prekop, whose light and jaunty pop songs are tinged with jazz. **Archer Prewitt,** the guitarist in Prekop's band, also presents his solo offerings. Sept. 9: Modest Mouse front man Isaac Brock's new band, **Ugly Casanova.**

POP NOTES



BEST OF BRITISH
When she was young, Marianne Faithfull was young with a vengeance: she epitomized the fast-living London of the sixties, and earned as much fame for her romantic involvement with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards as she did for her music. Then Faithfull was old with a vengeance; starting with her startling 1979 comeback album, "Broken English," she delivered a series of bleak and weary recordings full of cracked, cronelike vocals. Faithfull's new record, **"Kissin Time"** (Virgin), returns her to youth through a set of male collaborators that include Beck, Billy Corgan, and Pulp's Jarvis Cocker. Beck's three contributions form the heart of the album, and, while "Sex with Strangers" is plodding and robotic, "Nobody's Fault," which was originally a wan ballad on Beck's own album "Mutations," blooms into an epic of self-doubt and tentative salvation. The other would-be showstopper, Cocker's "Sliding Through Life on Charm," is a wry, foulmouthed adaptation of Faithfull's own autobiography that's too self-conscious by half. The album ends on a surprisingly carefree note, with a sunny cover of the Herman's Hermits chestnut "I'm Into Something Good."

Though Linda Thompson hasn't recorded since the eighties (a rare condition called hysterical dysphonia rendered her unable to sing), her new record, **"Fashionably Late"** (Rounder), is a marvel of modern folk. The opener, "Dear Mary," features her ex-husband, Richard, on backing vocals and guitar, but it's Linda's crystalline tone, which conveys the same melancholy intelligence as it did a quarter-century ago, that gives the song its heft; the same is true for the closer, "Dear Old Man of Mine," a portrait of Richard that is at once affectionate and chilling. The real revelation is Teddy Thompson, Richard and Linda's son. His solo début, back in 2000, was pleasant if undistinguished; here he writes or co-writes more than half of the songs, plays wonderfully understated guitar, and contributes vocals, including a duet with his mother on the aching "Evona Darling."

Bryan Ferry covered Bob Dylan's "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" back in 1973, on his first solo record, which was full of glammed-up takes on rock and soul standards such as "Sympathy for the Devil" and "The Tracks of My Tears." His latest album, **"Frantic"** (Virgin), finds him back on familiar ground. While his own compositions are as tuxedo-and-cocktail suave as you would expect, it's the covers, which include two of the most imposing entries in the Dylan catalogue ("It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right"), that give Ferry the best opportunity to display his impeccable taste and interpretive bravado.

—Ben Greenman

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 5-6: **Tortoise** headlines Thrill Jockey's tenth-anniversary celebration (see also the Bowery Ballroom). The band's influence on indie rock in the mid-nineties was so great that the term "post-rock" was coined to name the movement they engendered. Tortoise is a loose collective of Chicago-based musicians who turned away from the simplicity that much of the indie-rock world had striven for, in favor of technical prowess and the influences of free jazz. Their music has many surprises, and it can be both pretentious and fulfilling. Also appearing is the **Chicago Underground Duo** (members of which have done time in Tortoise). It concentrates on jazz in the style of the freakier side of Miles Davis. **Trans Am,** the occasionally progressive rock band with a hard-driving rhythm section, is an example of the label's wide reach.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 5: The **Weakerthans,** from Winnipeg, Canada, turn out introspective songs that have their roots in punk music but that also flower with sweet melody. Sept. 7: Dan Sullivan is an extremely talented technical guitarist who performs anagrammatically as **Nad Navillus.** He fingerpicks gently rolling songs, augmented by his pleasant, tuneful voice. Sept. 8: The keyboardist and Beastie Boys associate **Money Mark.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 6: Successfully conjuring the ghosts of Bon Scott, Molly Hatchet, and the MC5, the members of **Bad Wizard** put to shame many other bands who try to recreate the rock of the seventies. With **Dälek,** an avant hip-hop trio from New Jersey whose unconventional take on the notion of rap-rock is demonstrated in part by a willingness to share dressing rooms with the rebels in Bad Wizard.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—Sept. 7: **Sexmob** is the band with madcap jazz leanings led by the slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein.

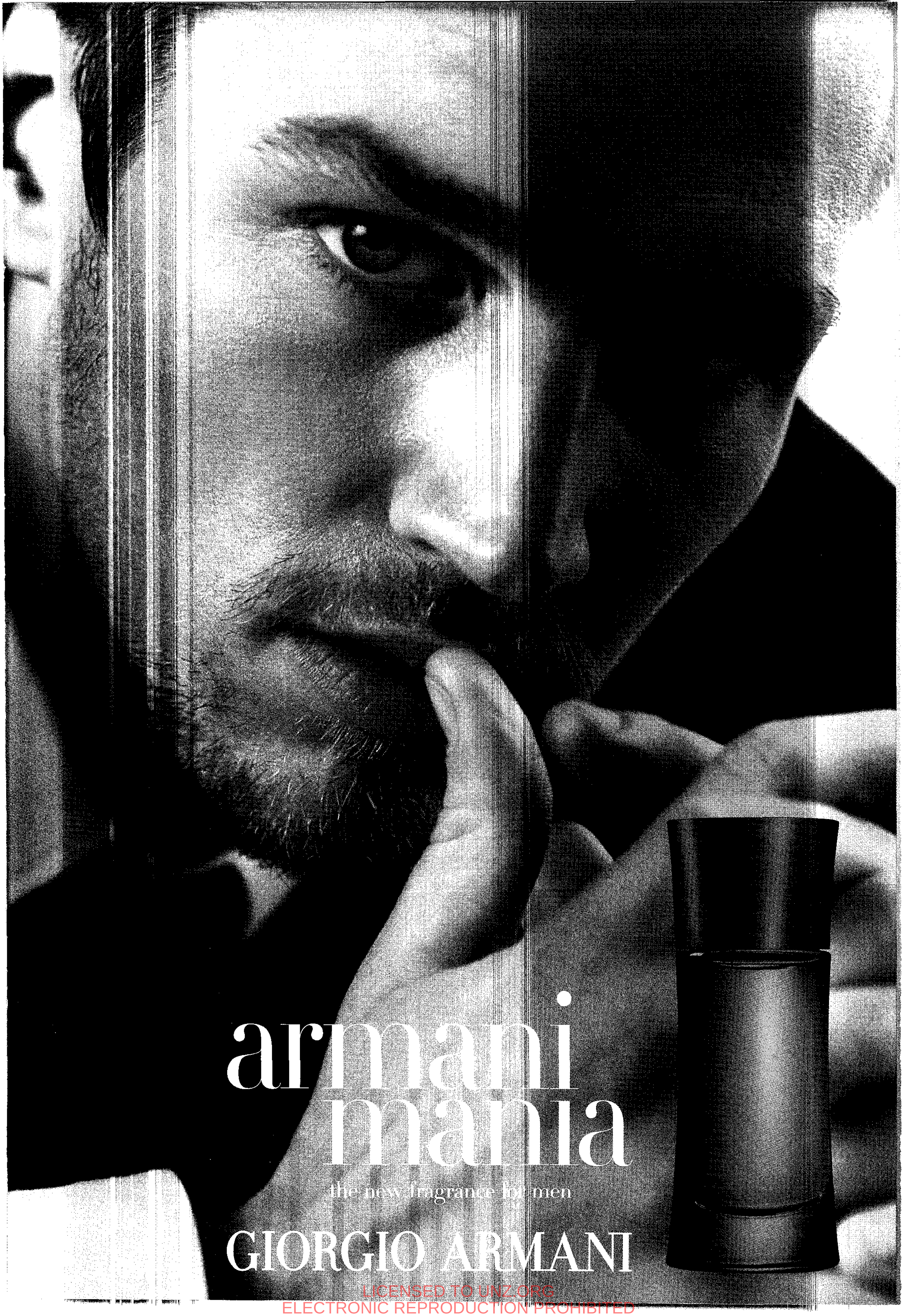
PETE'S CANDY STORE
709 Lorimer St., Williamsburg (718-302-3770)—Sept. 9: The **Microphones,** the Anacortes, Washington, experimental rock ensemble, stop by for a night of murky emotions and lo-fi meanderings.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope (718-230-0236)—Sept. 6: The **Silos,** the painter turned guitarist Walter Salas-Humara's musical collective, has a repertoire that's grown from back-country-tinged art pop to raucous garage rock and roll. With the dark country blues of the Fort Worth native **Johnny Dowd.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Sept. 4-7: The **Walt Weiskopf** quartet. Weiskopf is a saxophonist deserving of wider acclaim. A bona-fide jazz star, the pianist **Brad Mehldau,** does his part to help out during the balance of this engagement. **Renee Rosnes** sits in on the opening night. Sundays: The **Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Big Band.** The composer and arranger Chico O'Farrill, one of the grand architects of Afro-Cuban music, may no longer be with us, but his practiced big band, now in its fifth year at this venue, is under the sure hand of O'Farrill's son **Arturo,** himself a dynamo of a pianist. Mondays: The **Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra.** In keeping her big band afloat for four decades now, the extravagantly inventive pianist, composer, and arranger Akiyoshi has defied all the odds and then some. The ensemble is always packed with skillful and inspired soloists; Akiyoshi's husband, the tenor saxophonist and flutist **Lew Tabackin,** is a dependable feature.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—The mighty bassist Ray Brown, who died in early July, was a true jazz great. Through Sept. 8, a group commiseration takes place at Brown's New York home away from home, featuring a contingent of first-rate musical associates including the guitarist **Russell Malone,** the trumpeter **Jon Faddis,** the violinist **Regina Carter,** the trumpeter **Nicholas Payton,** the singers **Marlena Shaw** and **Kevin Mahogany,** and the pianist **Benny Green.**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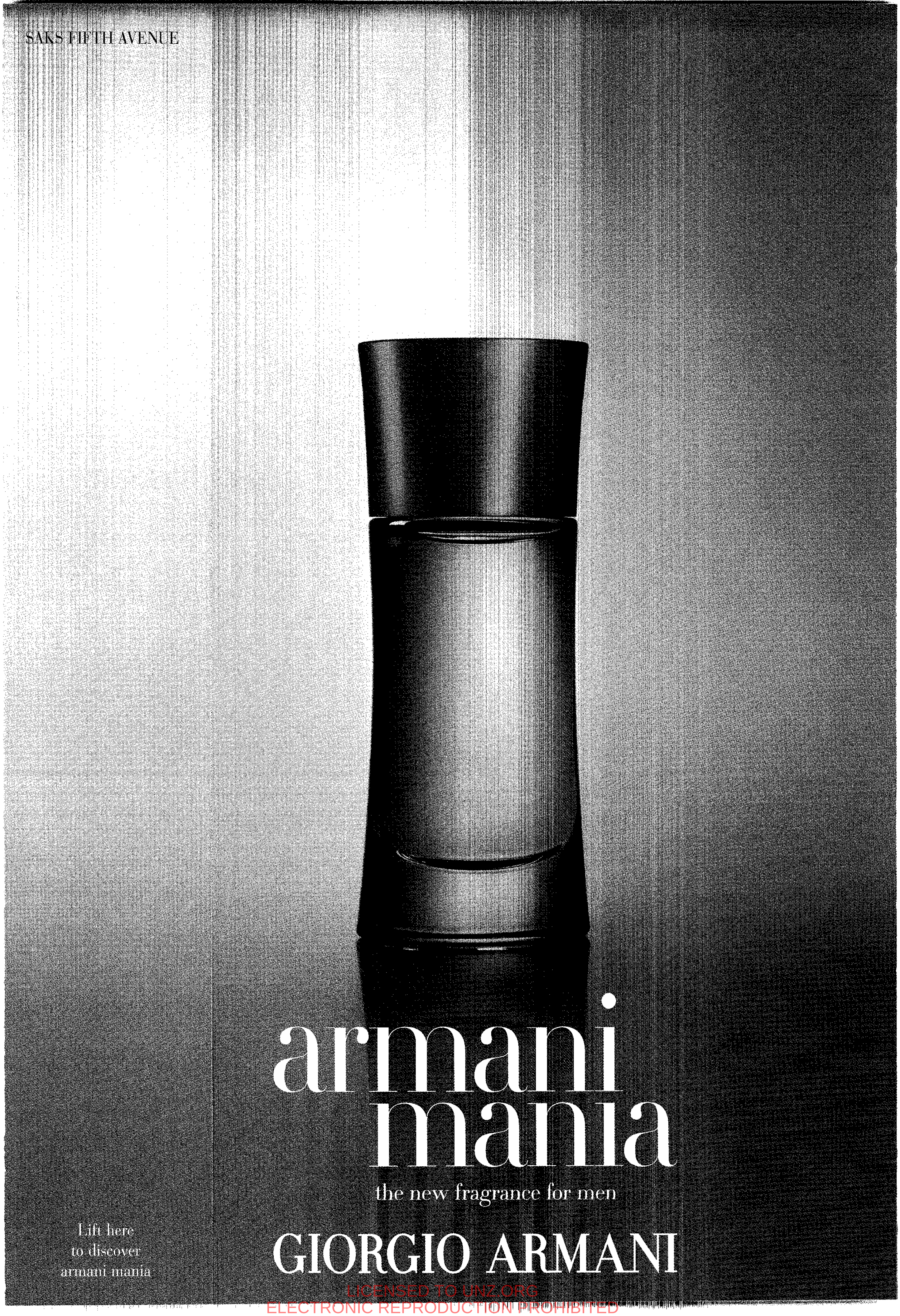
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IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 8: **Sphere** is returning to its roots. When the coöperative band formed in the early eighties, its repertoire drew exclusively from the pen of the great jazz iconoclast Thelonious Sphere Monk. The concept loosened up over the years as standards and group originals crept in, and by the time the original band dissolved, in 1988, the Monk association had become largely tangential. Re-formed in 1996 with the alto saxophonist Gary Bartz replacing Charlie Rouse (who died in 1988), Sphere is an occasional aggregation whose foundation rests firmly on its superb rhythm section: the pianist **Kenny Barron,** the bassist **Buster Williams,** and the drummer **Ben Riley,** who was a Monk associate during the sixties. Although the revised band also has a varied book, this engagement will focus on Monk tunes. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Sept. 5: She may never be as famous as Ry Cooder, but those in the know recognize that **Jane Bunnett** was an early pioneer in the burgeoning union of North American and Cuban jazz musicians. The Canadian saxophonist, who concentrates on the soprano horn as well as the flute, has made a series of impressive recordings with Cuban players that honor both idioms. Her Spirits of Havana band brings the links to life. Sept. 6-8: Ever on the lookout for new sounds, the bassist **Ben Allison** has lately incorporated an African *kora* (a twenty-one-string Manding harp-lute) into the lineup of his Peace Pipe ensemble. As heard on the upcoming album "Peace Pipe," the instrument blends beautifully with the more standard jazz instrumentation. No surprise really—Allison has sure instincts when it comes to outré moves. Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 5-7: The adventurous pianist **Ethan Iverson** displays the delightfully unruly side of his personality that he keeps in check during his other gigs (including his regular one as the musical director of Mark Morris's dance company). The Bad Plus trio, with bassist **Reid Anderson** and drummer **David King,** think little of doing damage to the work of Abba and Nirvana, among others.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—The saxophonist **George Coleman** (here with his quartet Sept. 6-7) may not be the toughest act to catch around town, but we take him for granted at our own peril. He's a ripsnorting tenor player who combines modernist expertise with a gritty edge that speaks of his deep Memphis roots.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 8: Anyone still complaining about the paucity of authentic jazz divas obviously hasn't heard **Mary Stallings.** Touched by the spirit of Carmen McRae, Stallings possesses an enchanting tone and a sure way with standards. She has the added bonus of the pianist **Eric Reed's** trio as accompanists. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

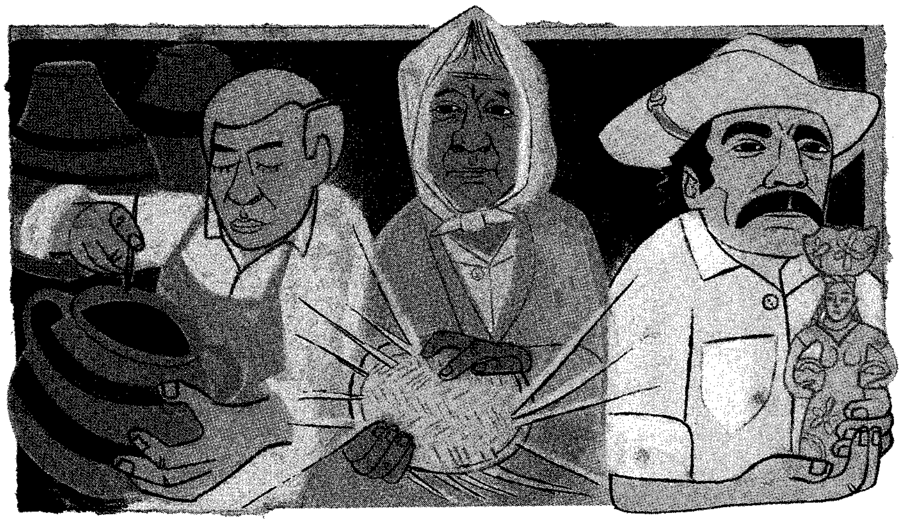
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Much of Denmark's famous Ordrupgaard Collection is summering in Manhattan while the collection's permanent home outside Copenhagen undergoes renovations. Assembled almost a century ago by the insurance magnate Wilhelm Hansen (1868-1936), the selection has a sensible French bias. Highlights include Ingres's portrait of Dante and a snarling Delacroix lion (both originally owned by Degas), along with a host of heartthrob pictures by the likes of Corot, Monet, Sisley, Renoir, and Gauguin. Equally impressive are the Danish rooms, which showcase realists like Skovgaard, Eckersberg, Christian Kobke, and the eerily great Wilhelm Hammershoi. Hammershoi—the missing link between Vermeer, Hopper, and Wyeth—creates empty mauve-gray interiors with a signature northern ghostliness. Through Sept. 8. ♦ **"Gauguin in New York Collections: The Lure of the Exotic"** crowds the downstairs of the Robert Lehman wing with a few familiar masterpieces—the Met's "Ia Orana Maria (Hail Mary)," the Albright-Knox's "Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching)"—and many lesser paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, documents, and oddities (portrait ceramic vessels, a carved walking stick representing a serpent and a wooden shoe). Saluting the Empire State's ravenous hunger for Gauguin, the unchoosy mélange affords a pungent sense of the artist's uneven, seductive mojo. Through Oct. 20. ♦ A magnificent retrospective of the works of Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), perhaps the greatest American artist before Abstract Expressionism, endorses the opinion of the artist's older friend and hero Walt Whitman: "Eakins is not a painter, he is a force." Cannily intermingled paintings, photographs, drawings, sculptures, and miscellaneous artifacts—such as grisly casts taken from parts of dissected cadavers—reveal the artist as a yeoman genius, strenuous in all things. Eakins made aesthetics sweat. It is astonishing how contemporary he feels today. Through Sept. 15. ♦ The venerable husband-and-wife team of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen has installed four recent sculptures in the roof garden. The best is a twenty-three-foot-tall garden spade, its jaunty red blade lodged in the patch of grass that sprouts from its pedestal. It looks as if an Olympian landscaper has just taken a lunch break, and it's perfectly suited to the panoramic view of Central Park. Less satisfying is a baroque white form atop a black rectilinear base. Though based on a Man Ray photograph of Mies van der Rohe's pocket square, it looks more like a crumpled sheet of paper or a gawky rendition of a cloud. Through late fall. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City. (708-9480)—The museum's temporary quarters in a big, blue renovated factory building near the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge are easy to get to, excitingly well designed, and, in its first shows, frantically entertaining, with a racy display of six classic automobiles from the museum's heretofore little-celebrated car collection and **"Tempo,"** a festivalist fun park dominated by conceptual and video installations on the alleged theme of time. Apart from gimmicky stuff with clocks and metronomes, the latter show suggests a transatlantic annex of the current Documenta in Germany with politically tinged works from Africa, Asia, and South America. Meanwhile, "Starry Night," "Demoiselles," and other jewels of the permanent collection get a chance in coarse, cold rooms to prove how tough they are. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

Workers installing Roy Lichtenstein's "Times Square Mural," at the Times Square station.

ROBERT POLIDORI

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—The museum's expansions have failed in some places (SoHo) and succeeded mightily in others (Bilbao). Perhaps in reaction to this, the newest item on the roster—an exhibition partnership with St. Petersburg's State Hermitage Museum and Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum—tries a different strategy: doing much with little. **"Connecting Museums"** is the first foray into shows that share collections, and it includes only three paintings: Velázquez's 1654 portrait "Infanta Margarita Teresa in a Pink Gown," from the Hermitage; "Portrait of Baertje Martens," from 1640, one of the Rembrandts in the Kunsthistorisches Museum collection; and the museum's own "Before the Mirror," by Manet, from 1876. Pampered princess, sturdy bourgeoise, and anonymous courtesan—the wildly varied visions of three masters are presented as a mini-history of European portraiture, from Velázquez's depiction of distant majesty to Rembrandt's psychologically acute contemplation of the middle class to Manet's secret glimpse of a demimondaine's back. Through Oct. 20. ♦ **"Moving Pictures."** When artists post production credits at the entrance to photography exhibitions (Gregory Crewdsen) or première their latest work at the Ziegfeld (Matthew Barney), it's clear that contemporary art has fallen under the spell of cinema. The Guggenheim tracks the seduction from the late sixties to the present in a rigorous and entertaining show of photography, film, and video from its permanent collection. The show opens whimsically in the lobby, with Nam June Paik's "TV Garden," dozens of monitors of varying sizes peeking out from a jungle of potted plants. It continues up the ramp chronologically, from early conceptual work by Acconci, Mendieta, and Nauman to a mini-multiplex: five small theatres screening works by young artists from Pierre Huyghe to Shirin Neshat. Through Jan. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)


"Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art," at the National Museum of the American Indian.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—This mid-career retrospective of the work of Michal Rovner, an Israeli-born New York artist, opens with a mesmerizing black-and-white video; row upon row of moving figures cross paths silently in silhouette. (The image suggests an animated musical score with pedestrians in place of notes.) Rovner's work straddles photography, video, and digital art, riffing on minimalism with serial imagery of abstracted subjects. Through the artist's manipulations, bathers in the Dead Sea become ghostly bodies in suspended states, and flocks of birds transmogrify into foreboding constellations. There's a self-conscious gravitas to this stuff: despite arresting individual works, the over-all effect is aggravating. The work suffers from the kind of monotony that is often confused with momentousness. Through Oct. 13. ♦ Joan Mitchell, the long-underrated second-generation Abstract Expressionist who died in 1992 at her home near Monet's Giverny, spoke paint. A sumptuous retrospective confirms her as a major artist. Mitchell's varieties of abstract landscape conjure nature (including the difficult human kind, in ornery and exacerbated moods) out of pigmented stuff with authoritative abandon. Lessons from Pollock, de Kooning, and, yes, Monet are apparent but thoroughly subsumed. As with great Monets, you sometimes can't tell what you are looking at. It's paint, sure, but as a medium of metaphysical mystery. Through Sept. 29. ♦ A cheerfully low-key survey of seventies-era short films by the Canadian Jack Goldstein celebrates his campy structuralism. The artist, a staple of the eighties gallery scene, was a central figure in the establishment of postmodern appropriation tactics. We see trademarks like the M-G-M lion, along with deadpan portraits of such everyday objects as a knife, a chair, and a glass of milk, popping up in works that run from nineteen seconds to twenty minutes. The exhibition is arranged in three sections, with two screens looping three programs of films, while the other one continuously projects "The Jump" (1978), whose squiggly-lined animations catch a high-diver in hypnotic, predigital yet pixellated repetition. Through Sept. 22. ♦ **"Visions from America: Photographs from the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1940-2001."** Don't let the title or the opening image—a tattered flag by Robert Mapplethorpe—fool you. This show has less to do with America than with the evolution of American photography over the past sixty years. In any "greatest hits" show, the choices can seem arbitrary; here it's the disjointed thematic groupings. In the first gallery a group of New York pictures from the forties and fifties (Weegee's drunken socialites, Feininger's lunch-hour rush down Fifth Avenue) segues inexplicably into a series of abstract patterns (Aaron Siskind's tar on asphalt and Minor White's ice crystals). The show's theme may be best summed up in its playful, art-about-art works like Laurie Simmons's glamorous portrait of a camera with legs or William Anastasi's deadpan series "Five Photographs/Five Cameras," in which only four cameras appear, as the fifth records them. Through Sept. 22. ♦ Two surveys of drawings—one by Claes Oldenburg alone, the other by Oldenburg with his wife, Coosje van Bruggen—are quiet but surefire crowd pleasers. Normally, Oldenburg presents gigantic sculptural versions of ordinary objects, like a screwdriver or a light bulb; the drawing format shrinks the artist's bread-and-butter shtick to fit his drafting table. There are deliriously deadpan sketches from the early sixties for monumental vacuum-cleaner and Silex-juicer sculptures, and a precise architectural rendering for a "museum design based on a cigarette package," with the smokes poking out like mammoth ductwork. When van Bruggen (who often worked uncredited with Oldenburg) officially joins in, color appears and the drawings loosen up, as if a tune had started playing somewhere and the shuttlecocks, typewriter erasers, and safety pins started to dance. Through Sept. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN CRAFT MUSEUM
40 W. 53rd St. (956-3535)—**"Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation"** presents decorative objects—textiles, jewelry, ceramics—by contemporary Native American artists whose work both draws on and challenges traditional forms. (The first of a three-part series, this show focusses on the Southwest.) Highlights include Christine McHorse's gourd-shaped vessel, with a lustrous glaze and curving organic form that rival any Edward Weston pepper, and Charles Supplee's corn-shaped pendant, with lapis lazuli, coral, and diamonds in lieu of kernels. Some works err on the side of heavy-handed whimsy, as in Diego Romero's bowl, which relocates Manet's "Déjeuner sur l'Herbe" to New Mexico's Frijoles Canyon. Through Sept. 20. (Open 10 to 6 and Thursday evenings until 8.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (265-1040)—The museum began its collection in 1962 with the gift of a gate in the shape of an American flag. Forty years later, the same gate opens **"American Anthem,"** a densely packed show of art and objects dating from the Colonial period through the present day. Works range from the utilitarian and conventional (quilts) to the decorative and bizarre (a gold-painted tower of turkey bones). Many objects celebrate American patriotism, as in an intricately carved cabinet topped with a silhouette of the Statue of Liberty from the late nineteenth century. A stark contrast to ideals of freedom is provided by the troublesome inclusion of a three-dimensional "game of chance," from the mid-nineteenth century, depicting a slave auction. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (849-8300)—The ambitious if scattershot **"Skin: Surface, Substance, and Design"** makes a case for skin-deep design, showcasing objects from the past five years which traffic in ideas about membrane and surface. Fashion and furniture are well represented (there's even a blue nylon windbreaker that doubles as an inflatable chair), but the curator, Ellen Lupton, casts a wide net, presenting contributions from disciplines as diverse as biotechnology (a fascinating sampling of artificial skin and cartilage) and filmmaking (clips of movies from "Frankenstein" to "Aliens"). Sometimes this pluralism is stretched too thin, as with a visually tepid shelf of "cosmeceuticals," skin-care products packaged to resemble medical supplies. Through Sept. 15. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

ISAMU NOGUCHI GARDEN MUSEUM
32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. While it's all of interest—early gold-plated brass works, cast-bronze models for unrealized playgrounds, Japanese paper lanterns adapted for electricity—stone is the core medium. Its names alone (jasper, serpentine, Languedoc marble, red Persian travertine) are sensuous, and the stone sculptures rise among the birches, ivy, brick, and steel of Queens like indigenous art—relics of a civilization. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—Toward the end of **"The City of K: Franz Kafka and Prague,"** a wall text warns, "You are now about to enter the Threshold." If this sounds like the kind of thing you might expect to find at the entrance to a carnival ride, that's no accident. Organized for Barcelona's Centro de Cultura Contemporánea, "City of K" gives Kafka the Vincent Price treatment, with black walls, spotlights, and a soundtrack of spooky slitherings, thuds, and chimes. At one

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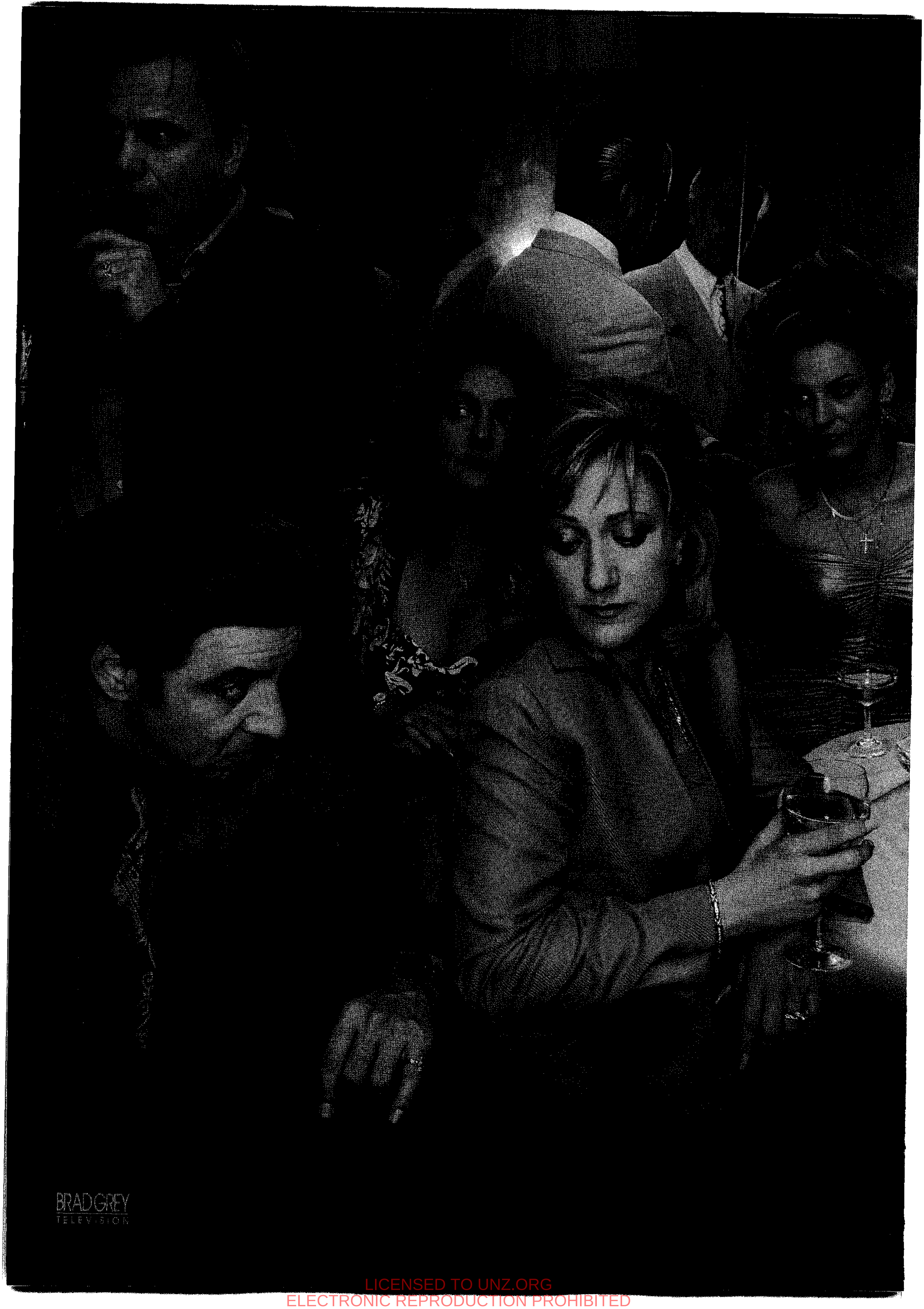
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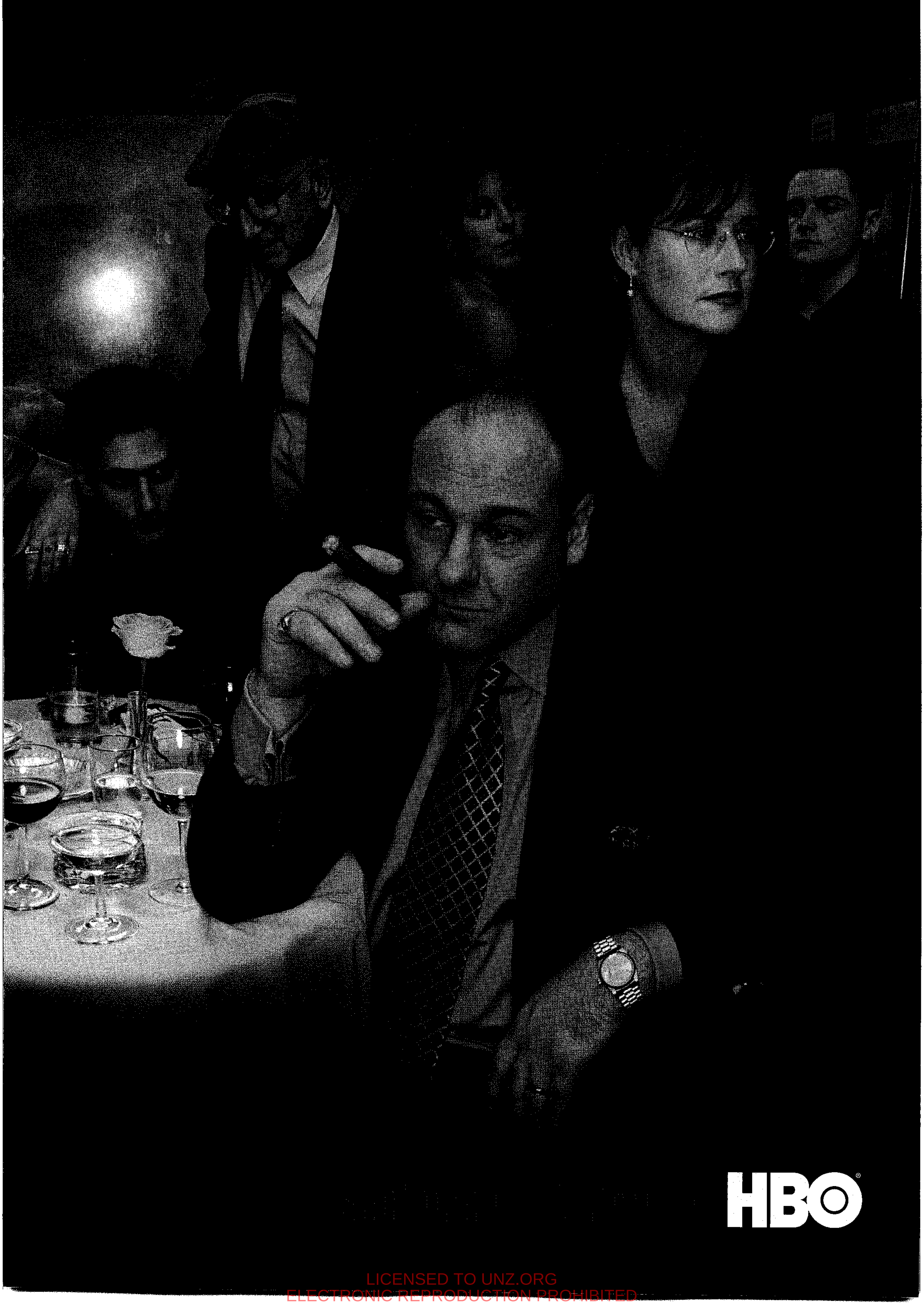
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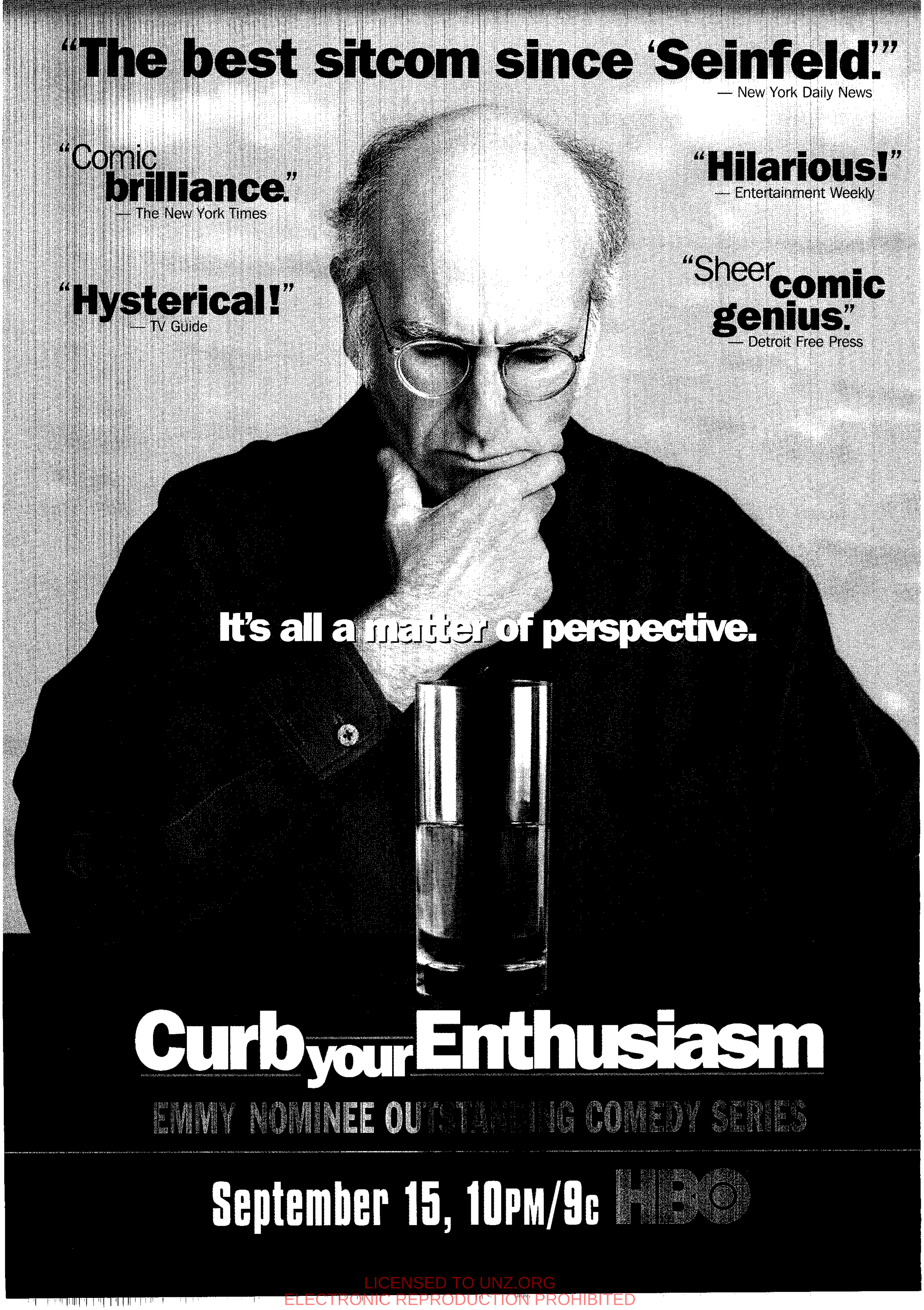

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point, a photograph of Kafka and his fiancée, Felice Bauer, trembles as though projected onto the surface of a puddle. Then Kafka begins shrinking. Finally he vanishes altogether. "City of K" may prove to be the "Showgirls" of the museum world, an exhibition so egregious and dopey that it is remembered for years with campy affection. Through Jan. 5. (Open Sundays 10 to 5:45, Mondays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY

29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—**"David to Cézanne"** shows off the library's growing collection of nineteenth-century French drawings, most of them recently acquired or promised gifts. The walls are dense with exemplary treasures: Prud'hon nudes, Ingres portraits, Daumier lawyers, Degas horses, and some unusually large Cézanne watercolors. There are also plenty of one-offs (e.g., a Delacroix view of a stable seen from the back, as a long procession of horses' rumps), and masterpieces by unknowns. Among the latter is an amazingly elaborate, highly stylized piece of elegiac erotica by the short-lived Fulchran-Jean Harriet (1778-1805). The subject, drawn from Vasari, is Raphael expiring in the arms of his mistress. She arches her back; he drops his pencil. Above them, ranks of angels look on, unembarrassed. Through Sept. 8. ♦ **"Honor, Glory, Adventure: Books for Boys in the Age of Pierpont Morgan"** offers a selection of ingeniously made, innocently grand entertainments for young gentlemen. Lodestars of children's literature appear in first editions: the tales of Hans Christian Andersen, "The Wizard of Oz," "Black Beauty" (curiously subtitled "The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse"). More captivating, though, are the various pre-cinematic viewing contraptions: the French Phenakistiscope and Polyorama Panoptique, the German Kinematefor, and assorted anamorphic images on cards, displayed with mirrored cylinders in which to view the distortions restored to proper shape. Through Sept. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5; Fridays, 10:30 to 8; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—**"The Artist's Eye: Jane Freilicher as Curator."** The National Academy invited the painter Jane Freilicher to rummage through its permanent collection and curate a show from her findings. The resulting exhibition, refreshingly free from thematic constraints, celebrates the practice of painting, from a tiny Ralph Blakelock sunset made from furious daubs of fire-colored paint to a sweeping still-life of wild swans (think: Chardin game bird) by Emil Carlson rendered in the steely palette of a thunderhead. The exhibition is divided into two galleries with the show-stoppers reserved for the largest (a third room contains a lovely selection of Freilicher's paintings). These include the aforementioned Carlson and a vivid self-portrait in overalls by the late Icelandic artist Louisa Matthiasdottir, whose cheerful palette and deceptively straightforward approach mirror the poetry of Freilicher's own work. Through Sept. 22. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

1 Bowling Green (514-3700)—Japan has its Living Treasures, and Mexico's Fomento Cultural Banamex has recently instituted a similar program, identifying a hundred and eighty-one living masters of traditional folk arts. In **"Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art,"** more than five hundred works by these artisans are displayed, from brilliantly painted ceramics to dazzling embroideries and gleaming silver. Items are arranged according to their materials, allowing comparison between different achievements in wood, wax, stone, tin, leather, beadwork, paper, and glass. Among the most amazing entries are a group of doll-house-size chairs exquisitely carved from horn by Luis Felipe Murillo Carrillo and Carlos Chacón Gómez and a pair of gold-and-flower-encrusted Day of the Dead skulls by Wenceslao Rivas Contreras, which look like polychromed marble but are actually molded sugar. Through March 15. ♦ **"Booming Out: Mohawk Iron Workers Build New York."** For a hundred years, Mohawk ironworkers have been "booming out," travelling from communities in upstate New York and Canada to the city, working on bridges and skyscrapers from the Empire State Building to the George Washington Bridge. This show documents six generations of Mohawk men from two nations (Akwesane and Kahnawake), combining pictures by photojournalists (including Lewis Hine's famous image of a precipitous lunch on an I-beam) with images shot by the boomers themselves. (All are mounted on panels and interspersed with explanatory text.) There is a section devoted to the World Trade Center, dealing with both its construction and its demise—and the museum's location, just a few blocks from Ground Zero, heightens the impact of this already moving show. Through Oct. 15. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—For the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the museum offers a tutorial called **"Me, Myself, and Infrastructure,"** which holds forth on engineering and the design and maintenance of the man-made world. The structures under investigation range from the near-invisible, like water mains and cell-phone towers, to the conspicuous, like dams and Wal-Marts. The show, originally scheduled for the World Financial Center this past spring, concludes with a professional disclaimer for the fall of the World Trade Center: "No skyscraper design could ever have taken into account the conditions of the September 11 attack." Similar apologias (there was "no way of recognizing" that the St. Francis Dam was built on weak rock) and political gambits (the federal government receives C's and D's on an infrastructure-maintenance report card) contribute to a sense that the show, which doesn't seem to know whether it's meant for adults or children, is slightly out of place at its present venue. Through Sept. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

TABLES FOR TWO

SILVER MOON BAKERY

2740 Broadway, at 105th St. (866-4717)—There are a lot of disturbing sights on the Upper West Side, and one of them is the crowd at Hot & Crusty; people pack into the outlet on Broadway and Eighty-seventh like zombies convinced they're in an actual bakery instead of a fast-food chain.

Sad, when not far north there's some serious baking going on at Silver Moon, a place that seems more Left Bank than upper Broadway. The co-owner and head baker, Judith Norell, started out baking at home, but she later worked for Gerard Mulot in France and Le Pain Quotidien here in New York. Her pastry chef, Liliane Tambasco, was also in Paris, at Fauchon. On any given day, through the window of the sunlit corner store-front, you can watch Norell and her bakers turning flour into the bumpy loaves and buns and pretty tarts and cakes that line the racks like folk art. Which is to say that the food is often rustic but not always cheap (an apple tartlet is $4). And if you have your heart set on an apricot-and-hazelnut Parisienne (a favorite, with such nice chunks of fruit that it needs neither butter nor jam) it's best to call ahead or get there early.

Norell bakes everything from daily bread—baguettes, ciabatta, and challah—to more creative loaves, like the fig-and-black-pepper dome, the orange-chocolate bread, or the *pain au lait aux raisins*. A lot of the cakes and pastries sound plain, but plenty of them are complex and wonderful, such as the sage-walnut roll, or that apple tartlet, which tastes more like apple than some apples do. (Like most of the sweets, it's flavored less with sugar than with vanilla, or cinnamon, or butter, or all three.) For all the variety, only two kinds of quiche are available, but the feta, tomato, and onion, which has a rich, cream-style custard, is the only kind you need. In the summer, seating is available outdoors, where a pricier café menu is served, including fine sandwiches (the goat cheese cucumber-and-olive tapenade on olive-rosemary sourdough is best) and, of course, big bowls of café au lait. (Open daily from 7:30 to 9 on weekdays and from 9 to 9 on weekends.)

—Emily Nunn

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—The seven artists in **"Heart of Gold: Capitalism"** explore the relationship between commerce and aesthetics with mixed success. Chris Doyle gilds the gritty steps to the Williamsburg Bridge (three deadpan photos document the process); Peter Walsh offers "Hoard," an annotated bibliography of how society creates value (entries range from Mr. Peanut to P. T. Barnum, and free copies are available). A disproportionate amount of gallery space is devoted to "Climatex Lifecycle," a biodegradable commercial textile (artist Hope Ginsburg works in the company's marketing department). Worms transform remnants into compost near a pair of benches upholstered with the no-fun reminder "food = waste." Through Sept. 14. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

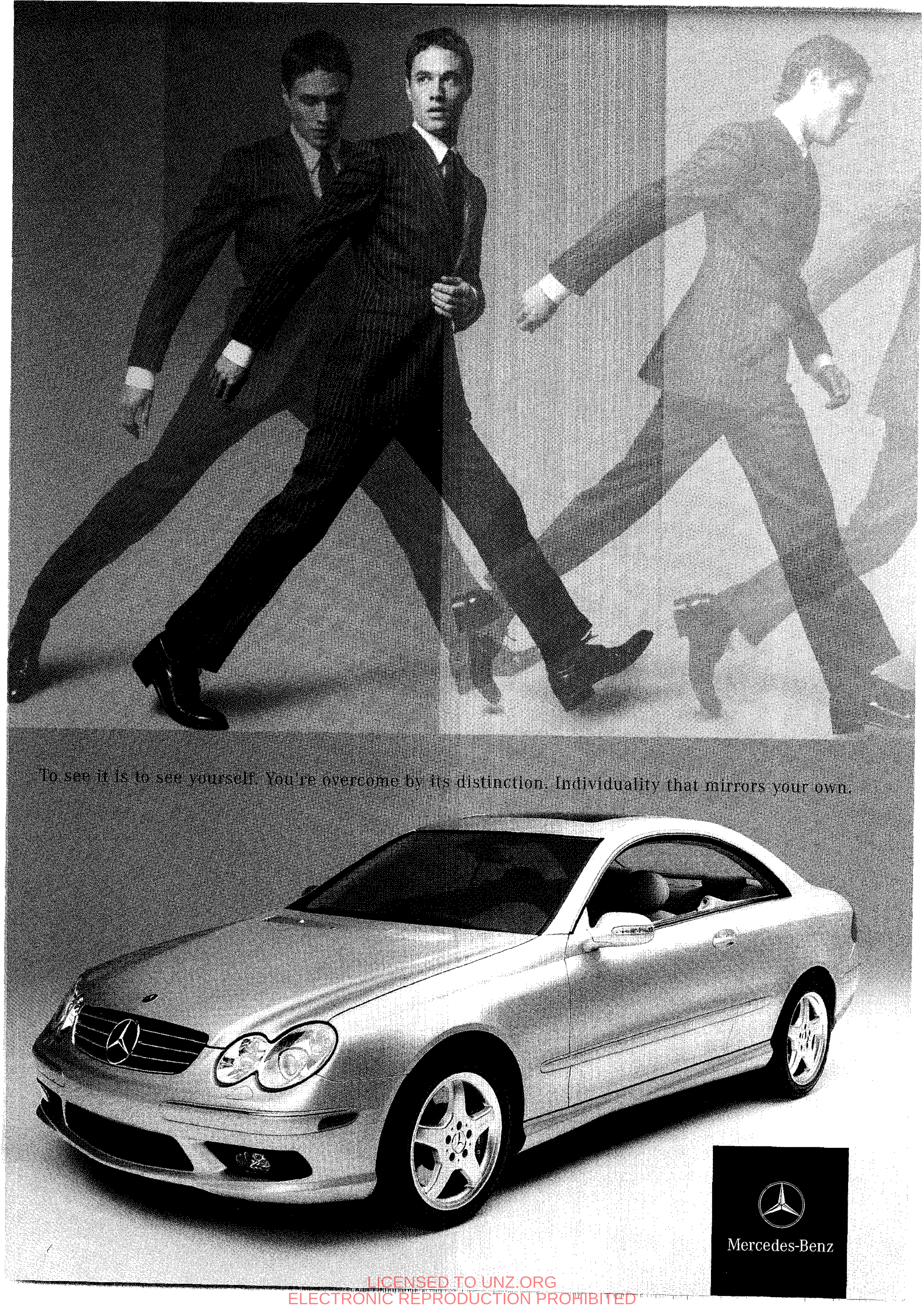
144 W. 125th St. (864-4500)—The annual artists-in-residence show, called **"Ironic/Iconic,"** features a portrait painter, Kehinde Wiley, a photographer, Kira Lynn Harris, and an installation artist, Adia Millett. Millet, the most accomplished of the three, builds macabre, evocative architectural spaces that owe something to Edward Kienholz, and summon up a kind of wishful gentility. Sometimes, the evocations are heavy-handed (a roach-infested bedroom with "The Preppy Handbook" lying on a bare mattress). But several pieces have a lovely, morbid delicacy, as in a tiny diorama of a room that's bare except for a chandelier and dazzling, scraped walls. It's a sort of elegy for a renovation. Through Sept. 22. ♦ Beauford Delaney (1901-79) left Knoxville, Tennessee, for New York just in time for the Harlem Renaissance. Soon, he left again, along with other mid-century black expatriates, for Paris and the Riviera, where he spent the rest of his life exploring the expressive properties of canary, butter, lemon, and acid tones. For **"The Color Yellow: Beauford Delaney,"** twenty-nine canvases, painted from the late forties until his death, display his unusual palette preference. Delaney felt that yellow was a color of redemption; after seeing works like the massive and serene portrait of Marian Anderson (1965), one is inclined to agree. A few works in a more agitated, Van Gogh-ish palette (bitter chartreuse and dark plum, for example) are less successful, as when a bright but choppy sea of brassy glow threatens to swallow up Ella Fitzgerald (1968). Through Sept. 22. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JOSEPH CORNELL

When the homegrown Surrealist died, in 1972, sixty or so large envelopes were found in his Utopia Parkway home. Each contained a smallish photo-collage, made from Cornell's typically macaronic imagery: parakeets, constellations, cacti, Renaissance cherubs, and attractive young women. Displayed together for the first time, these late collages make for a dense, dizzying, uneven array. The weaker ones are lightly altered pinups, evidence of Cornell's susceptibility to gusts of sentimental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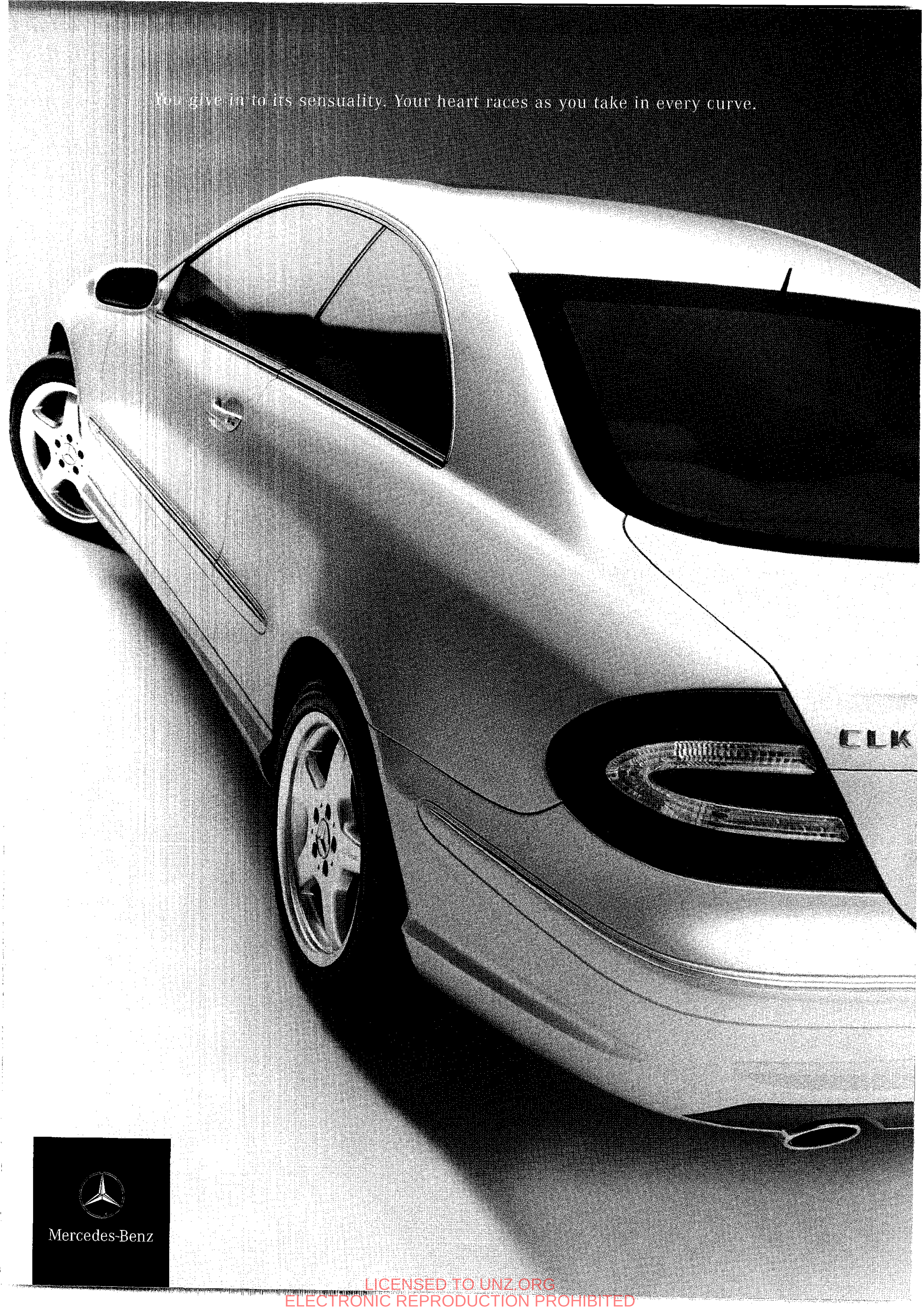
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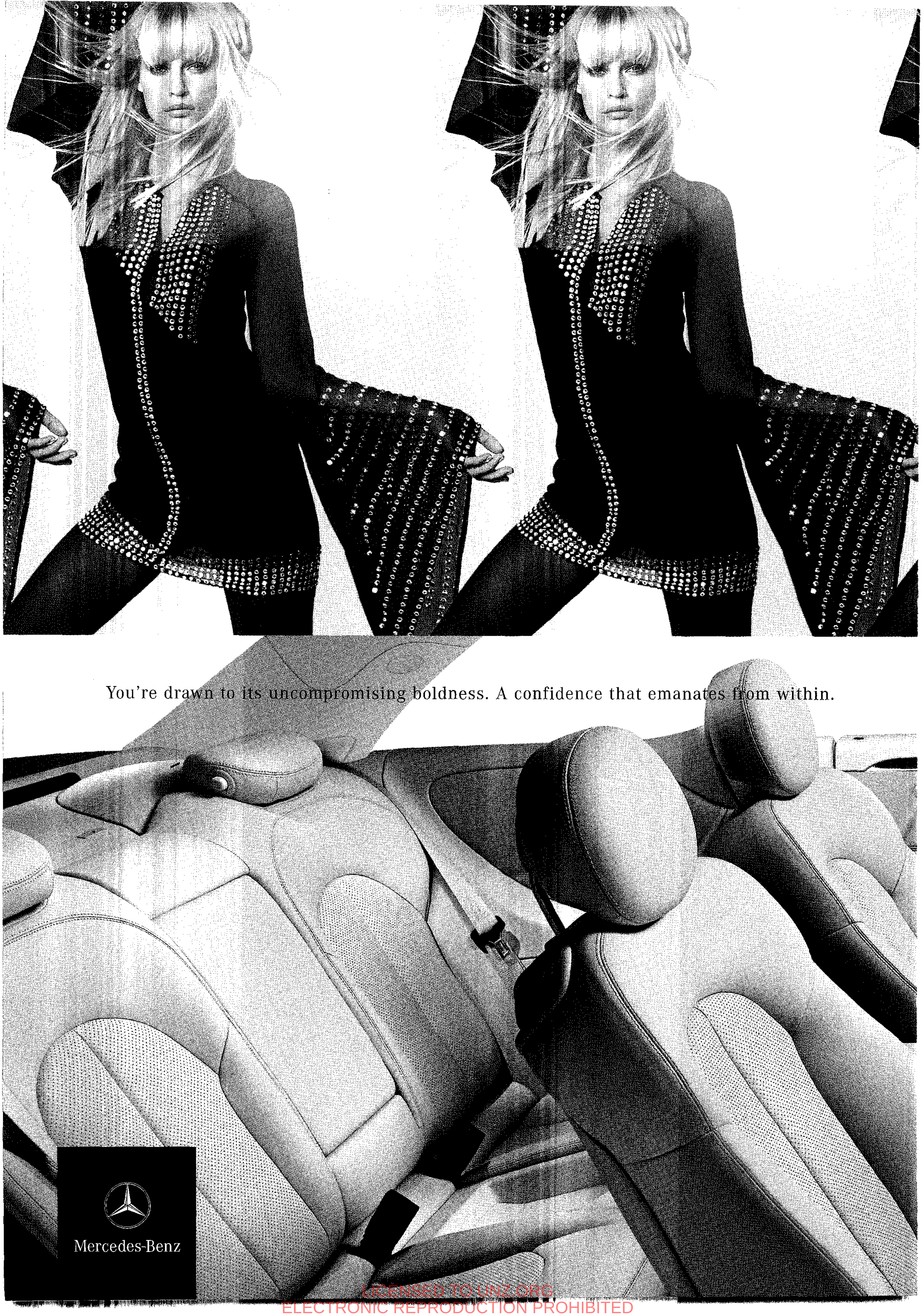
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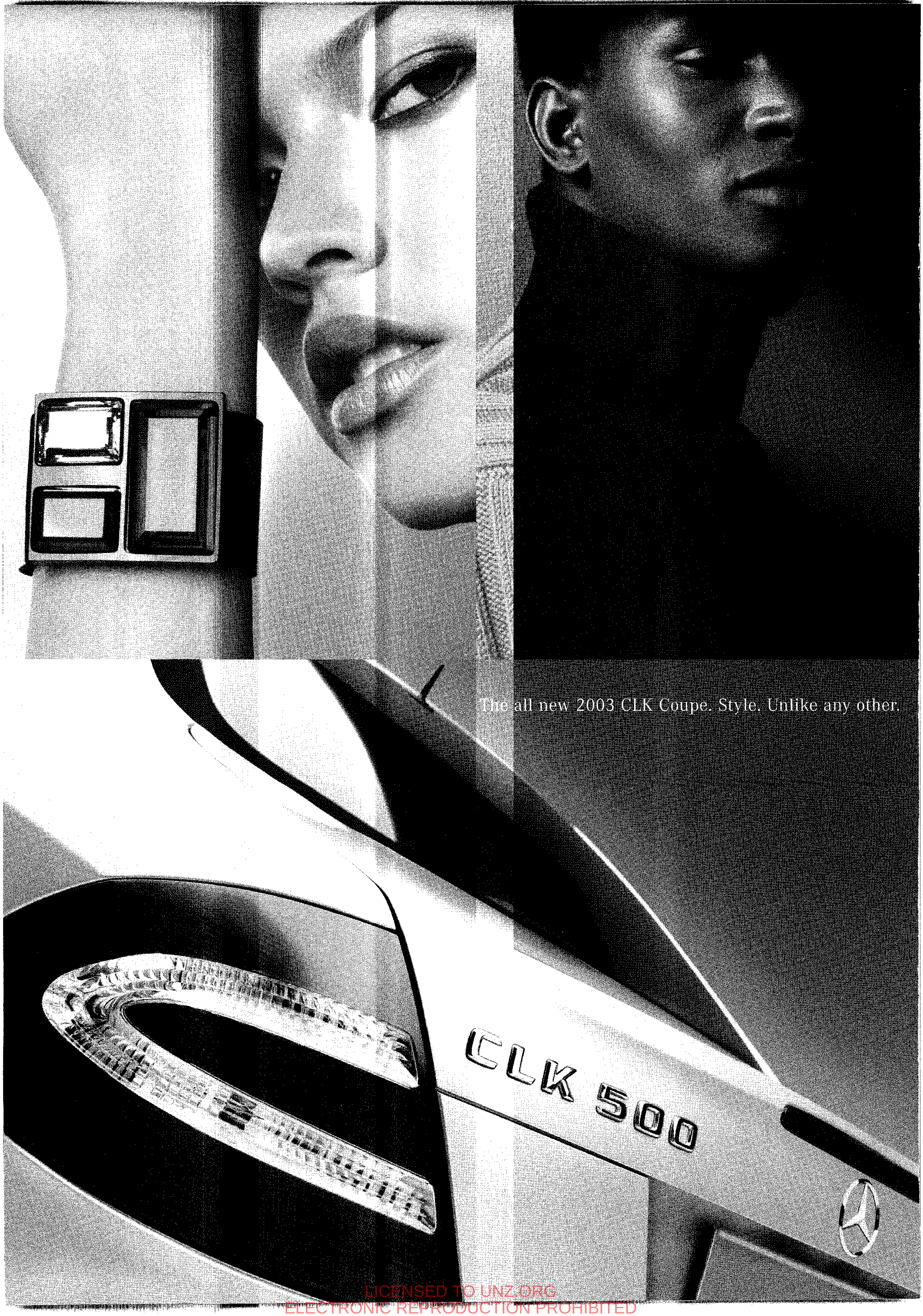
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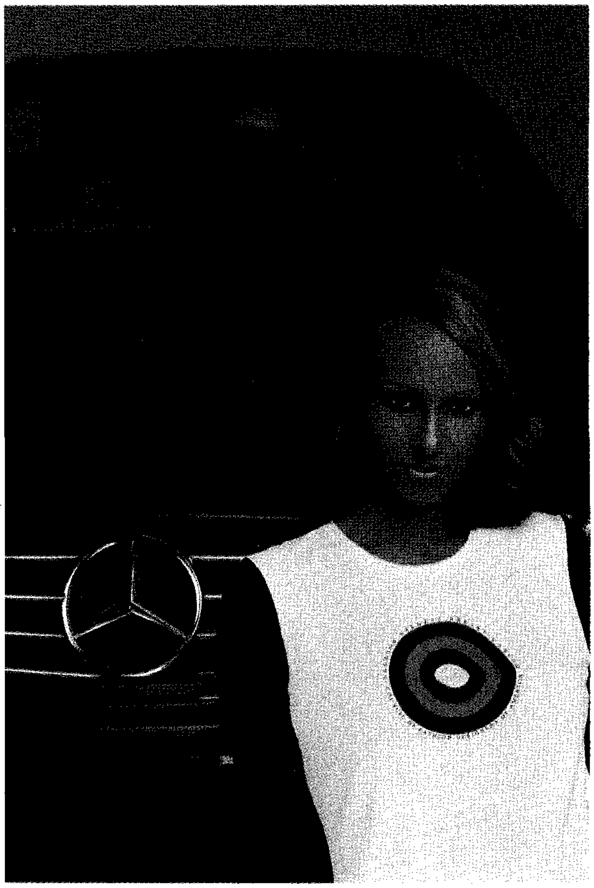

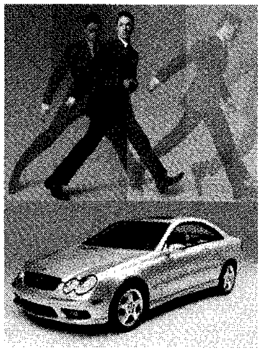
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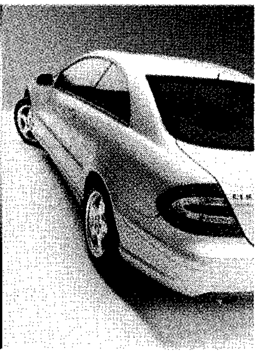
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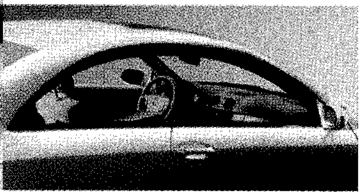
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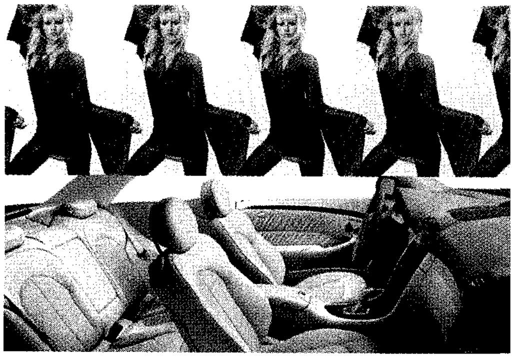
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Page 1: Pinstripe suit, white shirt and black tie, Dolce and Gabbana
Page 2: Silk georgette lace-up blouse with puff sleeves, Tom Ford for Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche
Page 4: Lace-up high-heeled shoes, Sergio Rossi; tights, Wolford
Page 6-7: Chiffon jeweled tunic dress, Diane Von Furstenberg
Page 8: Jeweled bracelet, Swarovski; red sweater, Michael Kors

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prurience. The best are as ineffable as Cornell's famous boxes: little two-dimensional vitrines of eeriness, loopiness, and melancholy. Through Sept. 13. (C&M, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020.)

NAM JUNE PAIK

The pioneer of multimedia installation has parked a fleet of classic cars, all painted silver, around a thirties-era radio tower, which is subject to hourly transmissions of laser beams ricochetting off nearby mirrors. The interiors of the cars are rigged with old hi-fis and stereos, all of which play Mozart, creating a sweeping nostalgia for bygone visions of the whiz-bang future. (30 Rockefeller Plaza.)

PATTI SMITH

A devotee's tribute: among the welter of concert posters and photographs are a group of original drawings whose woozy charm owes something to Ralph Steadman and Willem de Kooning. Unlike her singing, Smith's line is tentative, prone to erasure. The most compelling images—especially one of Bob Dylan crooning "I Want You" to a blonde with a Picasso tattoo—show Smith wavering between musical and visual loyalties. In an accompanying letter, she describes her songwriting process as moving from "one frozen image" to a "long slobbering succession of words." Through Sept. 7. (Gotham Book Mart and Gallery, 41 W. 47th St. 719-4448.)

SQUIRE VICKERS

Anyone who has admired the sweetly incongruous faience tiles of pastoral scenes on the walls of the Canal Street B.M.T. station has Squire Vickers to thank. The architect with a name straight out of Washington Irving designed the interior of the New York subway system in the early twentieth century. The paintings in this charming little show are reminiscent of mosaics, thanks to Vickers's prismatic compositions and his use of large-weave burlap in lieu of canvas. Best of all, you can enjoy the scenes of fantasy architecture and arboreal landscapes without baking on a subway platform. Through Sept. 14. (Shephard & Derom, 58 E. 79th St. 861-4050.)

"CONCENTRATIONS"

The gallery goes subdivision in six mini-exhibitions organized from its inventory. The unrelated installations run the gamut from mediocre (paintings of Niagara Falls, including two cloying scenes by Jasper Francis Cropsey, replete with rainbows) to magnificent (drawings of Gold Rush-era California by the German artist Adolph Schwartz, including a stunning interior view of a mine shaft). The thematic juxtapositions can be jarring, as when a hilarious section of Gilbert and George's "Postcard Sculptures" from the seventies (with assemblages like "Prince and Parents," which sports row upon row of a dorky Prince Charles) segues into bland portraits by the art-school administrator Frank von der Lancken. Through Sept. 13. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810.)

"DANGEROUS BEAUTY"

This intelligent, if cautionary, show details our cultural obsession with beauty. Pillowy lips have never looked worse than in photographs by Orlan documenting her own surgical procedure. Hernan Bas lampoons the quest for thinness in a photograph of a wraithlike man shooting up Slim-Fast. Fear of aging is touched on by Margi Geerlinks's photograph of an elderly twin literally smoothing out her sister's wrinkles—thanks to digital manipulation. Much of the work has a Surrealist bent, notably Daniella Dooling's "REMdress," a negligee made of thousands of fake eyelashes, just the thing to wear to tea with Meret Oppenheim. Through Sept. 8. (The Jewish Community Center, 334 Amsterdam Ave., at 76th St. 646-505-4444.)

"THE GREEKS AND THE SEA"

In Greece, one is never more than forty miles from the sea; the ancient Athenians, who lived "to swim and learn letters," were one of the first truly maritime powers. Most of this exhibit of Hellenic seacraft is haphazardly arranged, with ancient schooners listing alongside British-made steamers procured for the War of Independence, but two examples from antiquity redeem the trip. The mighty trireme was built after the Oracle at Delphi decreed that only "wooden walls" would save Athens from the Persians. Powered by two hun-

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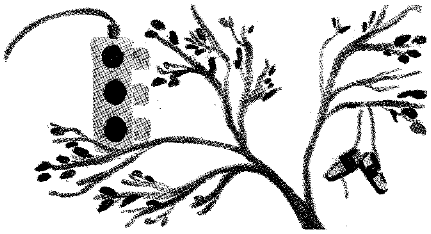
BOOK CURRENTS

Branch Library



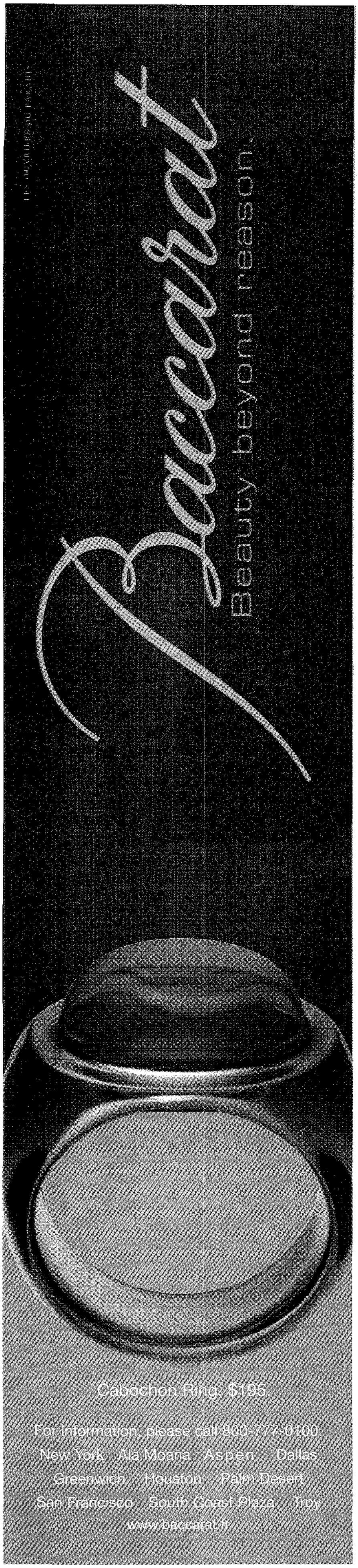
While walking in South Africa in 1829, the British missionary Robert Moffat came upon a giant fig tree so large that, according to his report, it housed seventeen huts in its branches. The historian Thomas Pakenham, in **REMARKABLE TREES OF THE WORLD** (Norton), spent four years searching for such giants—"trees with noble brows and strong personalities"—and recording their mythologies. The baobab, native to Africa, Madagascar, and Australia, was of special interest to him; according to African legend, trees were gifts to animals from the Great Spirit, and the hyena, enraged to be given the baobab, speared it into the ground, leaving its tangled roots to become branches. American trees are equally impressive: one of California's ancient sequoias, the "Stratosphere Giant," stands taller than a thirty-story skyscraper.

In 1848, New York needed trees: they were considered the "lungs of the City," according to a new field guide published by the city's Department of Parks and Recreation, **NEW YORK CITY TREES** (Columbia), written and illustrated by Edward Sibley Barnard. The guide describes more than a hundred local species, and it also explains which park was razed by Civil War soldiers, why Orchard Street is so named, and where to find the city's little-known sassafras thickets.

The environmentalist Robert Marshall's **THE PEOPLE'S FORESTS** (Iowa), first published in 1933, urges public ownership of forestland to guard against logging and other urban perils. On the other hand, Marshall acknowledges the persistence of nature. "The death of the forest and the death of man are not quite the same," he writes. "When a man dies it is the end."

—*Lauren Porcaro*

ELIZA GRAN



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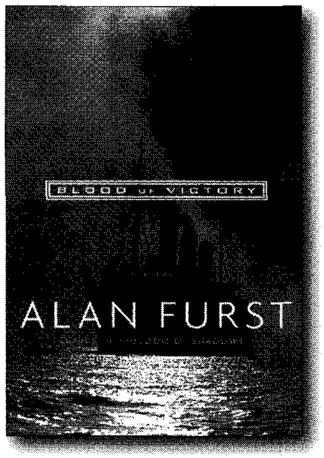
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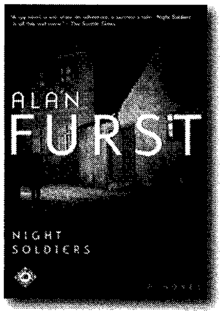
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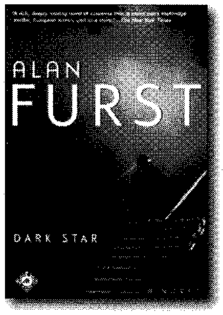
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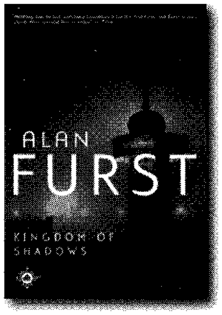
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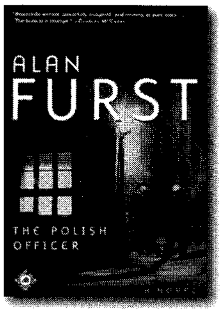
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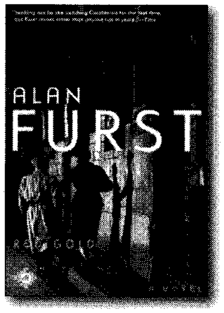
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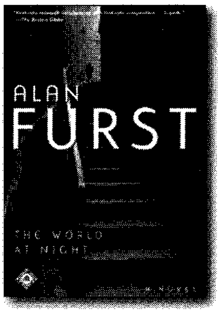
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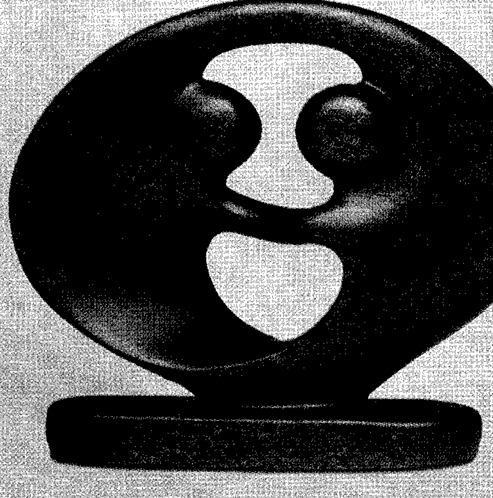

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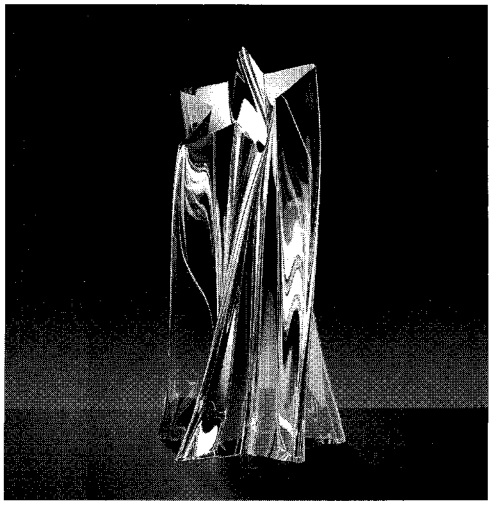

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dred oarsmen seated in three banks below decks, the warship speared its prow into the bellies of enemy vessels until they sank. By the Byzantine era, the Greeks had refined their attack: the *dromon* discharged "liquid fire" from its nose, a substance said to be so combustible that no sea could extinguish the flames; snake- and scorpion-hurling catapults provided backup. Through Sept. 26. (Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 7 W. 57th St. 308-6908.)

"IMAGINE NEW YORK"
In the months following the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Municipal Art Society ran a series of community brainstorming seminars called "Imagine New York." Their volunteers asked, "What have we lost?," "How have we changed?," and "What is your vision of the future?" The answers they got appear here in edited form, reduced (to the point of absurdity) to forty-nine common visions—from "Make neighborhood more livable" to "Reassess U.S. foreign policy"—accompanied by selections from the 18,642 raw drawings, models, and ideas sketched by respondents. Through Oct. 10. (457 Madison Ave., at 51st St. 935-3960.)

"PERFECT ACTS OF ARCHITECTURE"
MOMA may have moved to Queens, but it maintains a toehold in midtown, sponsoring an engaging and cerebral show of experimental architectural drawings. From the early seventies through the mid-eighties, a lacklustre economy slowed down new construction, freeing young architects (now all leaders in the field) to explore philosophical rather than functional concerns. Peter Eisenman muses on the theories of Noam Chomsky in a series of drawings that look like a collaboration between Sol LeWitt and Vasarely, while Bernard Tschumi storyboards a murder mystery starring a building. Through Oct. 19. (AXA Gallery, 787 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. 554-4818.)

"SIX CONTINENTS OF *QUILTS*"
This corporate lobby has never looked cozier than it does lined with fifty contemporary quilts on loan from the American Craft Museum. The materials range from the traditional vermillion cloth woven in a Moscow factory founded in 1846 and used by Ludmila Aristove in her "Firebird" quilt to the yellow plastic caution tape stitched into a quilt about San Francisco earthquakes by Joan Schulze (a comforter it's not). Through Sept. 13. (UBS PaineWebber, 1285 Sixth Ave., at 51st St. 713-2885.)

"SUMMER IN THE CITY: HIGH IN THE SIXTIES"
Confusing title aside (since when did a Lovin' Spoonful song conjure color-field painting?), this show offers some choice examples by stars of the genre. Part of the original show has already been replaced by a preview of the upcoming John McLaughlin exhibition, but those who like their painting stained and airy can still revel in Kenneth Noland's wobbly target from 1958, its red, yellow, and blue concentric circles spinning as happily as a child's top, or they can contemplate the comparative sobriety of Morris Louis's "Gamma," with its expanse of raw canvas punctuated on the left and right by arcing streams of black, midnight, and cobalt. Through Sept. 14. (Ameringer Howard Yohe, 20 W. 57th St. 445-0051.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

KARL MANN
If Joseph Cornell and the young Robert Rauschenberg shared a stall in a flea market, it might resemble this sprawling exhibition by a prolific self-taught artist who cobbles together collages and assemblages from urban junk (with a special penchant for plastic doll heads). The exhaustive show is billed as a retrospective, but the vast majority of work dates from the past four years (the curators appear to have edited nothing). The early work is the most arresting, including "In Memoriam," from 1964, a blue-stained pillow that wears a plastic orchid like a heart on its sleeve. Through Sept. 29. (The Viewing Room, 114 W. 17th St. 646-638-1920.)

DALZIEL + SCULLION / MARK DION / DAN GRAHAM
Two of these three *folies* seem designed for irony: Dalziel + Scullion puts solid aluminum tents in a park where people regularly bed down for the night, and Mark Dion presents a camouflaged "Urban Wildlife Observation Unit" in the limited ecosystem between Broadway and Madison. Only the two rooms of Dan Graham's glass slice-of-pie playhouse, "Bisected Triangle, Interior Curve," seem to fit in their surroundings, both in the material, smoked glass, and in the purpose, an homage to the Flatiron Building and the art of people-watching. Through Oct. 31. (Public Art Fund and Target Art in the Park, Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. 229-7607.)

"3000°"
Three thousand degrees is, roughly, iron's melting point, and these four sculptures all give an impression of solids morphing into other forms. Michael Dominick's modified radiator actually radiates heat, so much so that worried neighbors called the F.D.N.Y. Three sculptures—Mary Ziegler's kinetic, electromagnetic work; Win Knowlton's rectangular steel volume perforated on all sides like a complex piece of grillwork; and a glob by James Hegge, made by knocking a fibreglass object repeatedly off a roof—all comment, we are told, on entropy and formlessness, vertigo and displacement. The sculptures work nicely together. But curatorial efforts to tie it all into the work of Robert Smithson, Richard Serra, and Georges Bataille, and to propose that these three took up the aesthetic slack in American art post-Pollock—well, that's getting overheated. Through Sept. 7. (Rodgers/9W, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810.)

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

JENNY HOLZER
"Turn Soft and Lovely Any Time You Have the Chance" is the advice that comes printed on a pair of nylons and a wooden postcard in this engaging collection of multiples and documentation, at Printed Matter, a haven of artists' books. Everyday objects—pencils, golf balls, a jigsaw puzzle—are emblazoned with Holzer's enigmatic and pithy texts. Much of Holzer's work has a political edge, evidenced here by a condom wrapper printed with the phrase "Expiring for Love Is Beautiful But Stupid." Through Sept. 30. (535 W. 22nd St. 925-0325.)

GALLERIES-BROOKLYN & QUEENS

NINA KATCHADOURIAN
New Yorkers are used to the sirens of their habitat. But what if car alarms were just another species of organic song? From this quixotic premise comes Katchadourian's public-art project "Natural Car Alarms," sponsored by the Sculpture Center and migrating through the curbs of Queens, from MOMA QNS to the Sculpture Center, Socrates Sculpture Park, and P.S. 1. Her rigged cars are identifiable only by their sunny yellow bumper stickers and windshield decals of birds. But once the flock starts squawking, chirping, and shrieking, heads snap around in double and triple takes. Through Sept. 22. (Sculpture Center, 44-19 Purves St., Long Island City. For dates and locations, call 718-361-1750, or visit www.sculpture-center.org.)

"CONSUMING PLACES"
When Creative Time couldn't get its usual summer exhibition space, the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage, the organization traded up to three vast structures even closer to the waterfront. Naturally, this year's show is enamored of architecture, from 212Box LLC's glass-walled studio apartments cum billboards, designed to be attached to the sides of buildings, to the sound installation of Bridge-area ambient noise, circa 1983, installed by

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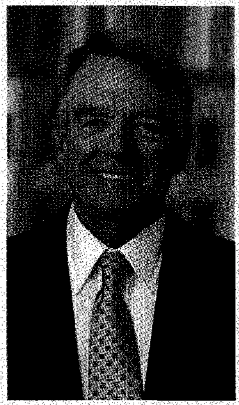

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Bill Fontana in one of the neighborhood's most exhilarating landmarks, the Tobacco Warehouse. The building's worn brick walls, wide arched windows looking out onto the city, and lack of a roof give it the quality of a Roman ruin that recalls our industrial glory days. Through Oct. 27. (16 Main St., at Water St. 212-206-6674.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

RUVEN AFANADOR
This Colombian-born photographer known for his surreal take on models in haute-couture fashion has turned to other corseted and glamorized bits of eye candy: bullfighters. Models in ball gowns face less mortal danger in their line of work than these novice toreros, but here the boys are no less romanticized or sexualized than the cover girls. Afanador captures the opulent pageantry so central to the corrida, and the handsome students meet his camera with a cocky, macho narcissism that belies the fact that they're in sequins and see-through hose, or nude except for a funny hat. In these lushly homoerotic images, Afanador seems to take particular delight in capturing the young men as they get into or out of their *taleguillas*, the beautifully embroidered tight-fitting breeches that leave little, sometimes nothing, to the imagination. Through Sept. 14. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059.)

DAVID LACHAPPELLE / DENNIS HOPPER
"Lately, the magazines have allowed me to go completely crazy," LaChappelle says in his show's catalogue. The results, in case you missed the original spreads in the pages of *Vanity Fair*, *Interview*, etc., are on view in all their supersaturated trashy splendor: Pamela Anderson nude inside a terrarium, Lil' Kim vamping in four-foot platforms, Angelina Jolie fellating the sky. Bracketed by Warhol tributes (an electric chair and a Marilyn of sorts), the show offers so much over-the-top silliness and ingenuity that it's easy to forgive the occasional off notes. / Downstairs, Hopper's austere, casual pictures (mostly shot in South Africa) gain something from the contrast with LaChappelle's outrageousness, like a long swig of tap water after an orgy. Through Sept. 21. (Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300.)

"NEW PHOTOGRAPHY"
In a strong bid to get people back downtown, the nonprofit group Wall St. Rising has installed a crash course in contemporary photography in the lobby at the Exchange building. Large-scale, color, newish work—most of which has been shown in New York in the last year or two—by luminaries such as William Eggleston, Lorna Simpson, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Cindy Sherman, is mixed with up-and-coming social observers like Dana Hoey (girls), Jessica Craig-Martin (socialites), and the very funny Anthony Goicolea (boys playing tug-of-war with a pug). It's rare to see so much topflight work in the same place, and rarer yet in the gallery-free financial district. Through Sept. 15. (The Exchange, 25 Broad St. 509-0300.)

Short List

JOHN COFFER
Melville, 213 Water St. 748-8600.
Through Oct. 10.

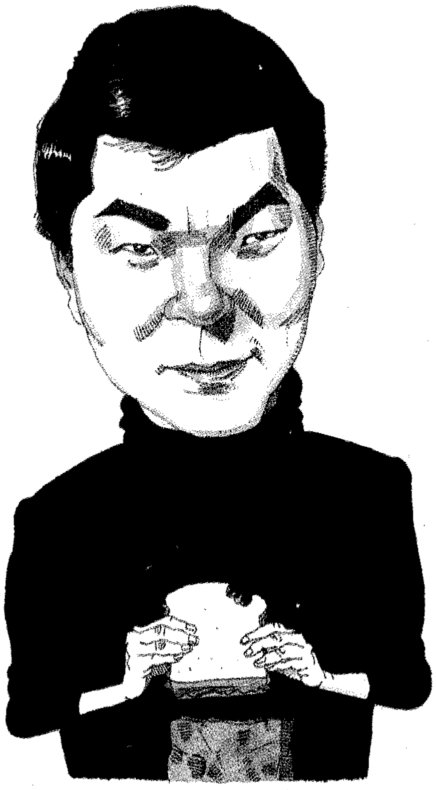
"ELEVATED CITY"
New York Transit Museum, Grand Central Terminal, Gallery Annex. 878-0106.
Through Nov. 6.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
Sept. 4 at 10 A.M. and 2 and Sept. 5 at 10 A.M.: Christie's resumes its monthly schedule of "house sales," a chance for decorators, designers, and collectors to peruse a wide range of furniture, porcelain, silver, rugs, decorative paintings, and other items. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
An album of opera's greatest hits wouldn't be complete without "O mio babbino caro," the sweetly pleading soprano aria that lies at the center of Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi." That piquant comedy, turned with a precision and bounce that let it stand comparison with "Falstaff," is the finale of **"Il Trittico,"** a rarely staged ensemble of three Puccini one-acts that opens City Opera's season. (The other two are the riveting "Il Tabarro," a gritty bit of Grand Guignol set among the stevedores of Paris, and "Suor Angelica," a sentimental religious tragedy set in a nunnery, which demands an overpowering performance of the title role.) Patrizia Zanardi makes her début in "Gianni Schicchi," as Lauretta, Gianni's pleading daughter, and Maria Kanyova takes on the formidable challenge of Sister Angelica; but the big news vocally is Mark Delavan, a robust American baritone on the brink of a major career, who plays the murderous Michele in "Tabarro" and comes back to sing the role of the crafty Schicchi, whose extralegal machinations (involving another family's will) ensure his daughter's happiness. The company has entrusted its new production to James Robinson, who directed "La Bohème" with aplomb last fall; the sets are by Allen Moyer. George Manahan conducts all three works. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Sept. 10 at 8.)



In the last concert of Trinity Church's lunchtime Schubert series, the baritone Christòpheren Nomura sings "Die Schöne Müllerin" on September 5.

JOE CIARDIELLO

"RETURN TO PARADISE"
Jerry Hadley and Michele Capalbo take the leading roles in Soong Fu-Yuan's new music-theatre work, a story of two lovers from disparate cultures living through the tragedy of September 11th. Michael Capasso (the founder of Dicapo Opera Theatre) is the director; Anton Coppola conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Sept. 7 at 8.)

RECITALS

"SCHUBERT SERENADES BROADWAY": CHRISTÒPHEREN NOMURA
This young West Coast baritone has more than earned his stripes in the opera world (he sang the role of Prince Yamadori in Sony's film version of "Madama Butterfly"), but he's especially admired for his lieder recitals, in which he delivers performances combining visceral emotion with a scrupulous technique. He sings "Die Schöne Müllerin" in the last of Trinity Church's free summer concerts, with the pianist Burkard Kehring. (Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 5 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

BARGEMUSIC
Beethoven is the composer of the month at Brooklyn's floating chamber-music series, always a good venue to spot up-and-coming artists sitting in with more established peers. Sept. 5-6 at 7:30: The violinist Mark Peskanov, the cellist Clancy Newman, and the pianist Steven Beck perform a concert of fringy repertory, the Trio in E-Flat Major, WoO 38, the Trio Op. 1, No. 1, in the same key, and the "Kakadu Variations." ♦ Sept. 7 at 7:30 and Sept. 8 at 4: The Piano Trios in G Major and C Minor (Op. 1, Nos. 2 and 3), played by Peskanov, the cellist Mark Kosower, and the pianist Phillip Bush. (Fulton Ferry Landing. 718-624-2083.)

MUSICIANS FOR HARMONY
In one of the first of many concerts in commemoration of the events of September 11th, three renowned string quartets—the Guarneri, the Juilliard, and the Shanghai—share the stage with Musique sans Frontières, a new ensemble of young Western and Middle Eastern musicians. In addition to quartets by Beethoven, Bartók, and Debussy, the program includes a setting of Arabic and Hebrew texts on peace by the composer and Metropolitan Opera baritone Kamel Boutros (who sings it alongside the Guarneri's first violin, Arnold Steinhardt), and three short new works with the ensemble (featuring Bassam Saba on flute, oud, and *ney*, and the percussionists Shane Shanahan and Yousif Sheronick). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 10 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

ALL-NIGHT VIGIL
In anticipation of September 11th, Peaceful Tomorrows (a pacifist advocacy group formed by family members of victims of the tragedy), the War Resisters League, and another dozen or so like-minded groups have organized a night of music, poetry, and candlelit remembrances on Sept. 10, starting at 7 with an interfaith service in Union Square Park. For more information, call 228-0450 or visit www.nycvigilforpeace.org.

READINGS
Sept. 5 at 7:30: More than two dozen dancers, poets, writers, singers, artists, and other friends and associates of John Cage pay tribute to the late composer on what would have been his ninetieth birthday. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 5 at 7:30: The poets Robert Thomas and Yusef Komunyakaa read from their work. (Fordham University, 12th Floor Lounge, 113 W. 60th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Sept. 9 at 7: A. M. Homes offers passages from "Things You Should Know," her new collection of short stories. (Half King, 505 W. 23rd St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Sept. 6 at 7: The art historian Julie Reiss talks about the rise of installation art. (Montauk Club, 25 Eighth Ave., Park Slope. 718-638-0800.) ♦ Sept. 10 at 6: Kenneth T. Jackson, the president of the New-York Historical Society, moderates a discussion with the writers Vivian Gornick, Jim Sleeper, Lee Stringer, and Guy Trebay about their contributions to "Empire City: New York Through the Centuries," a new book co-edited by Jackson. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.)

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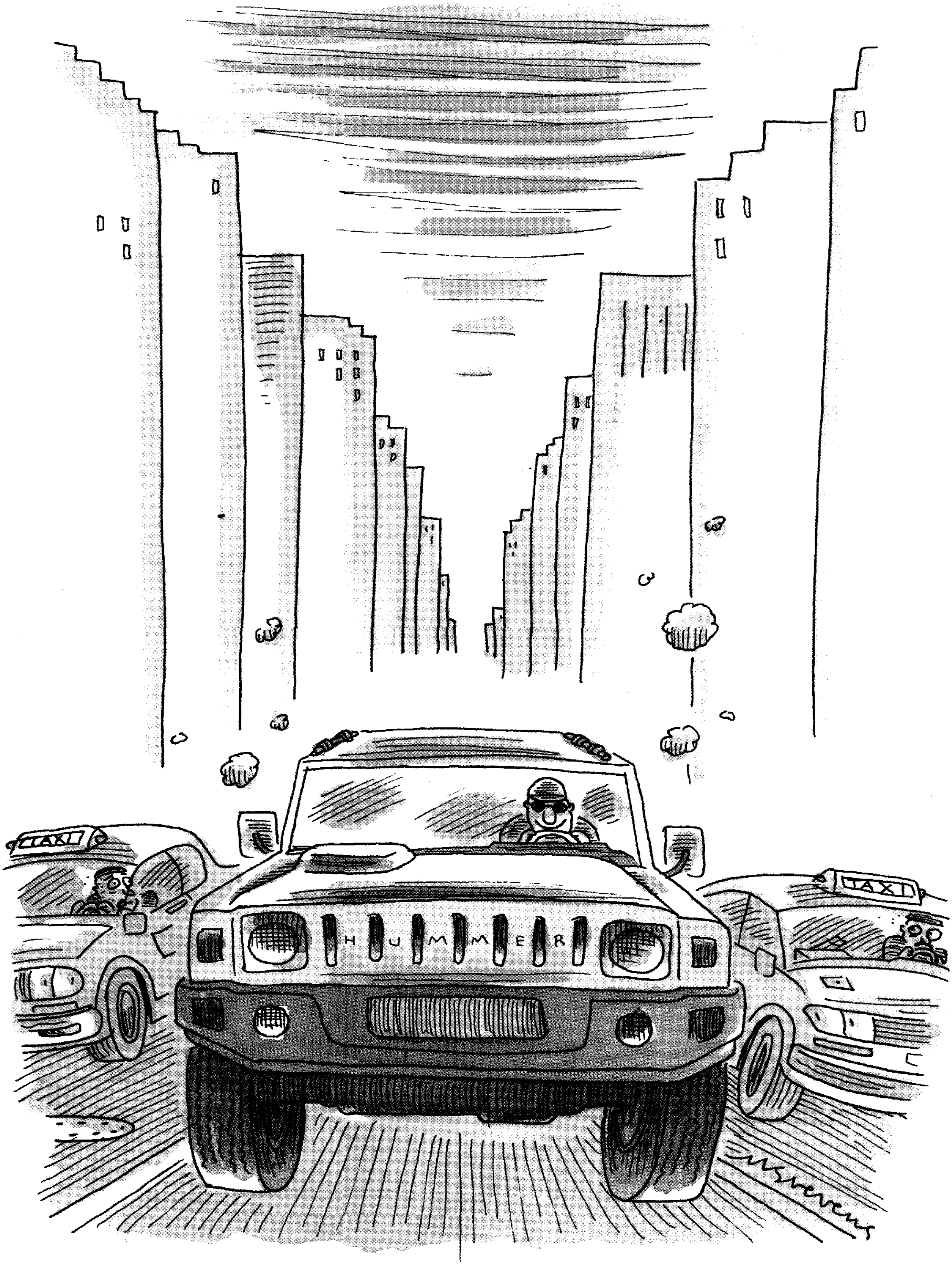
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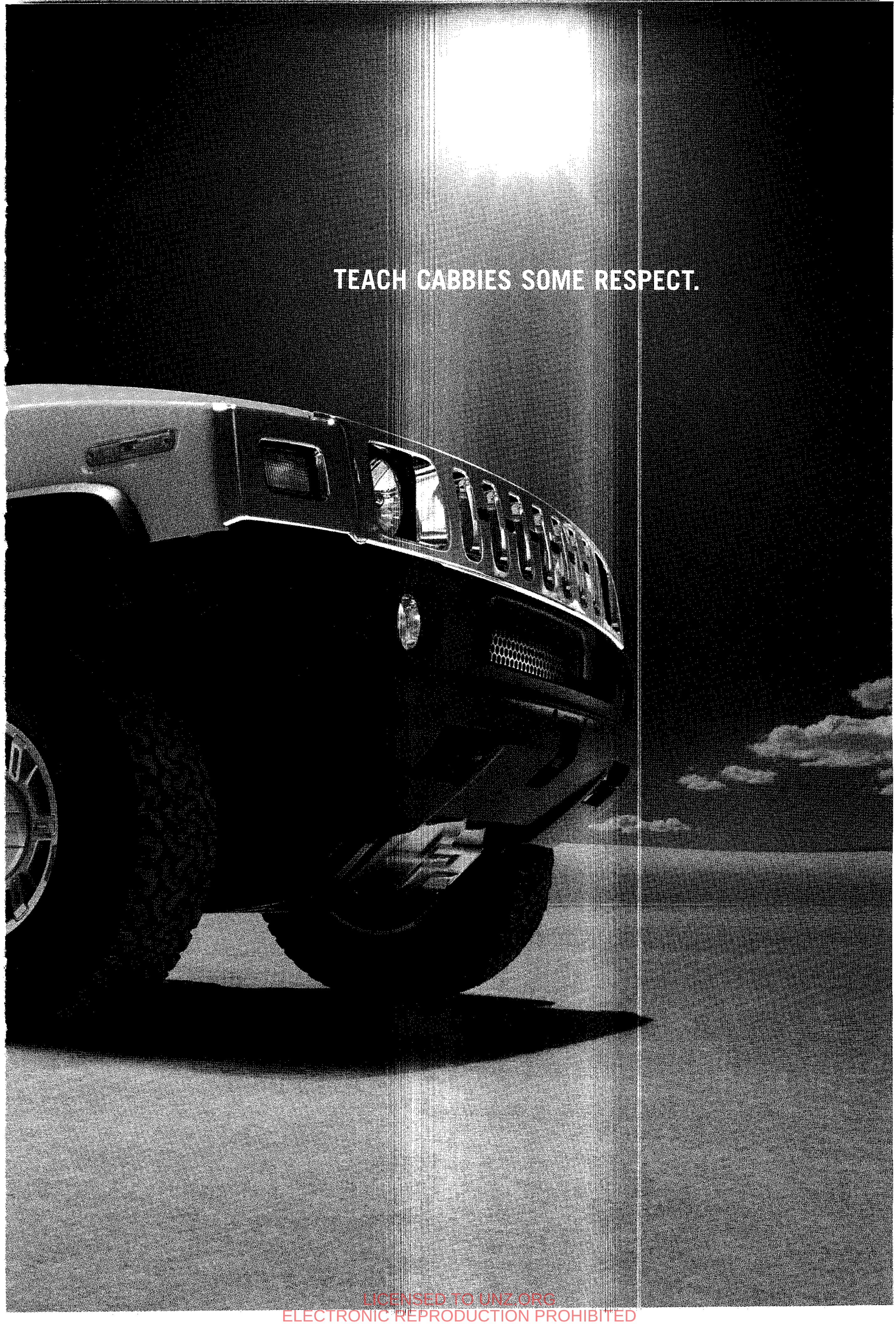
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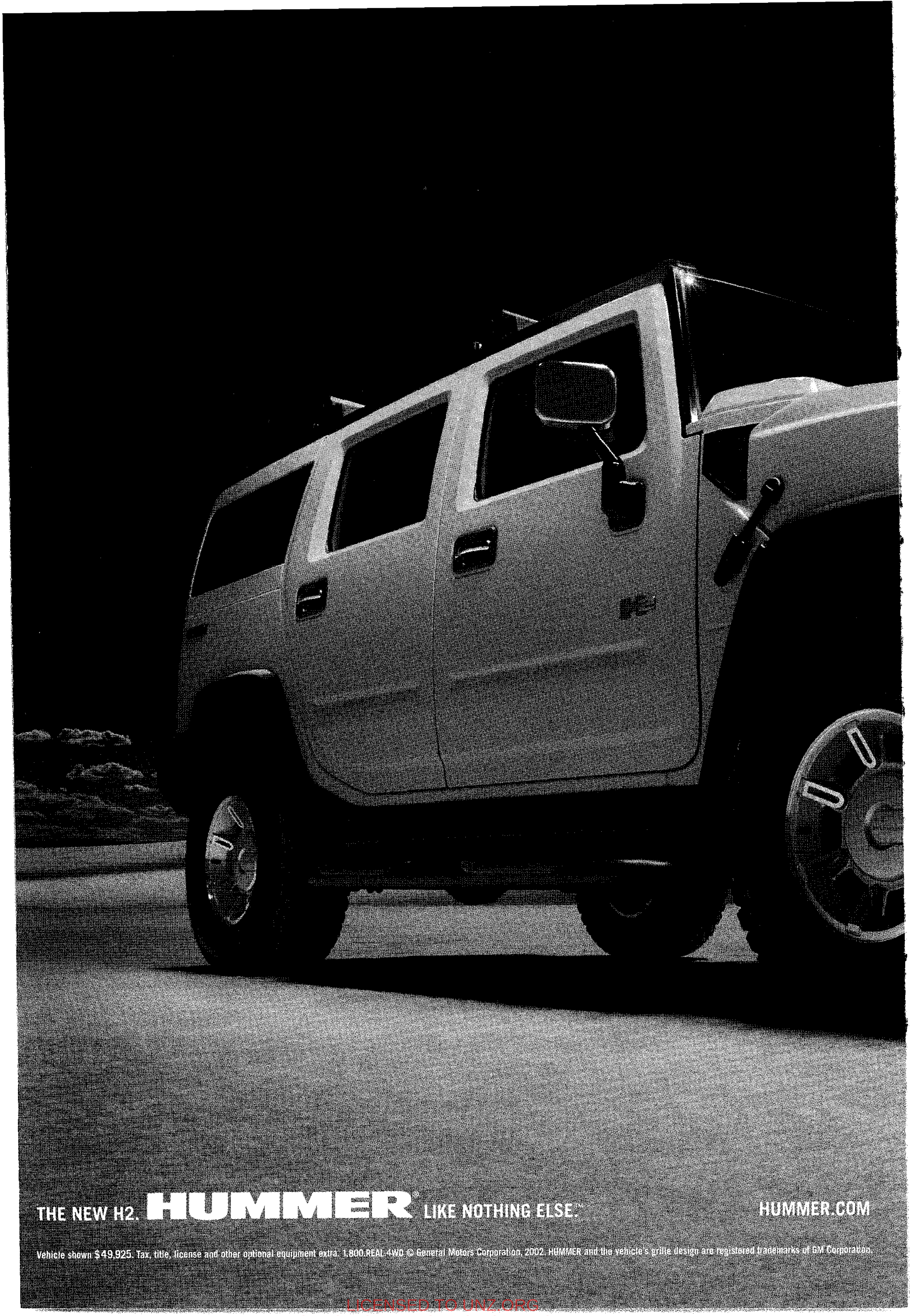
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MOVIES OPENING

CHILDREN OF THE CENTURY
Juliette Binoche and Benoît Magimel play the lovers George Sand and Alfred de Musset in a historical drama directed by Diane Kurys. In French. Opening Sept. 6.

CITY BY THE SEA
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 6.

THE EXECUTION OF WANDA JEAN
Liz Garbus ("The Farm") directed this documentary about an African-American woman on death row in Oklahoma. Opening Sept. 6. (Quad Cinema.)

HEARTBREAK HOSPITAL
A comedy about an actress (Chelsea Altman) whose career takes off when she's cast as a coma patient on a soap opera. Opening Sept. 6. (The Screening Room.)

IN PRAISE OF LOVE
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Sept. 6.

7 DAYS IN SEPTEMBER
Steven Rosenbaum directed this documentary about September 11th and the events of the following week, which incorporates both professional and amateur footage. Opening Sept. 6. (Battery Park 16.)

SWIMFAN
A teen thriller with Erika Christensen ("Traffic") as a high-school student who dismantles the life of a swimming star (Jesse Bradford) after they have a one-night stand. Opening Sept. 6.

THESE MEN OF CONSCIENCE
An hour-long tribute to New York City firefighters, directed by Carol Ann Francis. Opening Sept. 7. (Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

AUSTIN POWERS IN GOLDMEMBER
Comedic comfort food. After a spectacular opening salvo (loaded with cameos), the third installment of the swinging-spy shag-ology settles into familiar terrain: Dr. Evil (one of the four roles played by Mike Myers) doing his nefarious best to take over the world. Once again, Myers displays his gift for mimicry and his ability to mix it up with a midget. His cast includes an electric Beyoncé Knowles as his female sidekick and a dapper yet underused Michael Caine as his dad; they're ebullient foils to the script's formless frenzy.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

BLOOD WORK
An absorbing thriller that is really about Clint Eastwood's body—seventy-two years old and scarred for the occasion, but looking good at any age. Eastwood directed, and he plays a retired Los Angeles F.B.I. agent who, after a heart attack, receives the transplanted organ of a recently murdered woman. Against the advice of his doctor (Anjelica Huston), he decides to track down the murderer. The movie unfolds slowly and methodically, with great attention to the details of the plot; understanding slowly gathers in the mind of the hero. With Jeff Daniels as the shamefaced yacht-basin bum who lives on the same pier as Eastwood. Brian Helgeland, a specialist in tangled webs, adapted the Michael Connelly novel.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/19 & 26/02.) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BLUE CRUSH
"Flashdance" with waves. A teen-ager (Kate Bosworth) from the wrong side of the tracks works hard to win a surfing competition and falls in love with a visiting N.F.L. player, learning a valuable lesson about empowerment in the process. The film, set in Hawaii, is basically a nonstop music video with some tired plotting thrown in. Not that this distracts in any way from the spectacularly shot surfing scenes (the sound design—crashing waves, giant swells—must be about the best ever recorded) and a cast (which includes Michelle Rodriguez and Sanoe Lake, among others) that's buffed, toned, and minimally clad for maximum viewing pleasure.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

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THE DECALOGUE
Another dose of fun from Krzysztof Kieslowski: ten hours of cancer, abortion, incest, strangulation, and the thwarting of brotherly love, mostly set amid the rainy projects of an oppressed Polish town. This series was made for Polish television in 1988, when the nation was still under martial law, and comprises ten hour-long films, each devoted to one of the Ten Commandments. Given those factors, the whole endeavor could have collapsed into rusty political parable, but, though Kieslowski's subjects are often parodies of gloom, he picks his way through them with a gathering delicacy and a frowning ironic wit. Anyone who associates art films with monotonous meditation will be surprised to find these movies so packed with stuff; the director doesn't shy away from murder, car chases, or fine-boned blondes, or from the Hollywood hook of a mysterious letter that warns, "To be opened after my death . . ." Kieslowski spies shards of beauty in the rubble of crummy lives, and seems wholly at ease with the random possibility of miracles. Thou shalt not miss. In Polish.—*Anthony Lane* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

FULL FRONTAL
Steven Soderbergh and the screenwriter Coleman Hough have attempted a neo-Godardian deconstruction of cinematic reality, but the movie turns deconstruction into hash. Actors play actors who are making a movie within the movie, but half the time we can't tell whether we're in the inner or outer movie or why we should care. There are a few intense moments in which Julia Roberts, playing a magazine reporter, flirts with Blair Underwood, who plays a handsome black TV actor hoping to get his big break, but the scenes don't go anywhere. Neither does Catherine Keener's smoldering rage as a personnel director who, for some reason, throws a plastic globe at her company's employees and asks them to name the countries in Africa. The movie is the sort of whimsical and arbitrary mess that gives experimentation a bad name.—*D.D.* (8/5/02) (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.)

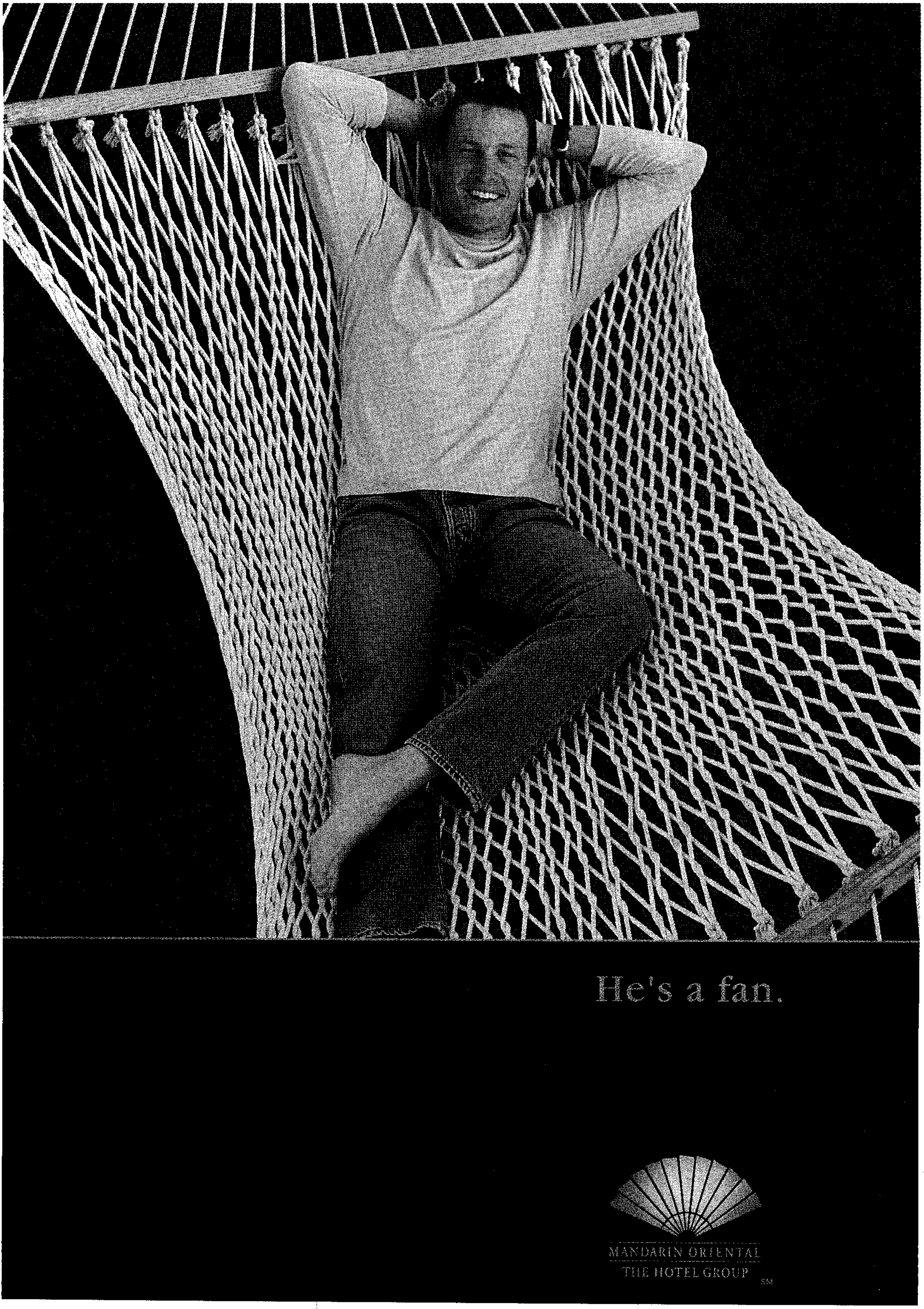
THE GOOD GIRL
A comedy, darkly told, with a plot that never fails to attract: is there a way out of my narrow life? Jennifer Aniston puts on a Texas accent and plays Justine Last, a clerk at a faceless superstore, which seems to be the new epicenter of modern angst. Her co-workers include a sarcastic goth girl (Zooey Deschanel), a hyper-Christian security guard (Mike White), and a hunky, teen-age malcontent (Jake Gyllenhaal) who oh-so-subtly calls himself Holden. Soon, Justine and Holden are discovering the pleasures of the stockroom together. The movie is well acted and very funny about delusions, especially the writerly kind. It also complicates our loyalties by making Justine's husband (John C. Reilly) a decent, likable guy, even if he does smoke too much pot. Everything seems poised for a great finale, with the melancholic afterglow of a good Raymond Carver story. But the movie loses its tone—tragic moments, including a suicide, get treated in a flimsy way, and camp triumphs over content. Directed by Miguel Arteta and written by White.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 62nd & Broadway, and 34th Street Theatre.)

IN PRAISE OF LOVE
The new film from Jean-Luc Godard is carved into two halves. The first is in gliding, rapturous monochrome, the second in angry color, all the more jagged for being shot on digital video. From that contrast springs the whole endeavor. Godard is caught, as so often, between elegy and protest—between a lament for certain ideals, private and political, and splenetic digs at prevailing cultural conditions. There is a story—we follow a dour sort called Edgar (Bruno Putzulu), who is himself trying to cast a movie on the subject of changing love—but the narrative is so diluted that you can't help sensing Godard's indifference to the fates of his characters. Instead, his passion seems to be given over to chastising Hollywood for its abuse of history; America at large also takes a beating, apparently on the ground that the place is not old enough. (What exactly is any country supposed to do about that?) Yet the work, like most of Godard, asks to be seen; its strains of regret tug at you, and hang around in the mind, with a persistence rare in more coherent pictures. In French.—*A.L.* (9/2/02) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE KID STAYS IN THE PICTURE
Before Robert Evans was discovered at a Hollywood swimming pool by the aging Norma Shearer, he was a garmento from New York with swarthy good looks and the confidence of a lion. Thrust into pictures in his twenties, Evans quickly became the head of production at Paramount, where he played a significant role in generating such classics as "Rosemary's Baby," "The Godfather," and "Chinatown." The movie is a celebratory narrative of his life, composed of newsreel footage, stills, and haunting shots of Evans's mansion in various states of glory and disrepair. Evans himself narrates in his gravelly voice: his speech is a cross between hardboiled rhetoric and the traditional crass-but-with-heart bullying of Hollywood power types. He comes off as a preposterously likable man, though the movie is so one-sided that you never get the truth of any situation that it touches on.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE LAST KISS
A superb, full-bodied Italian comedy written and directed by Gabriele Muccino. The movie is set in Rome, though it could take place in any large Italian city in which hip, good-looking young people work in a desultory way, cadge off their parents, go to weddings, hang out, and have sex a lot. As the characters long for more love and more freedom, the action is driven forward by a gliding camera that catches everyone in frenetic movement. The actors display prodigious gifts of temperament—that blessed absence of self-consciousness that links Italian opera to Italian comedy and makes so much French, English, and American work seem guarded or skittish by comparison. Muccino has a particular gift for lovers' quarrels, which he lets bloom into hilarious excess. In Italian.—*D.D.* (8/5/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING
The Second City comic performer Nia Vardalos lights up this low-budget "Moonstruck" about a homely girl and her overly dramatic Greek-immigrant family. When, after a quick makeover, she falls in love with a charming Wasp (John Corbett), her mother, father, and assorted relatives play the inevitable culture clash to the hilt. (Much of this material has been culled from Vardalos's effective standup routines.) The cast includes the



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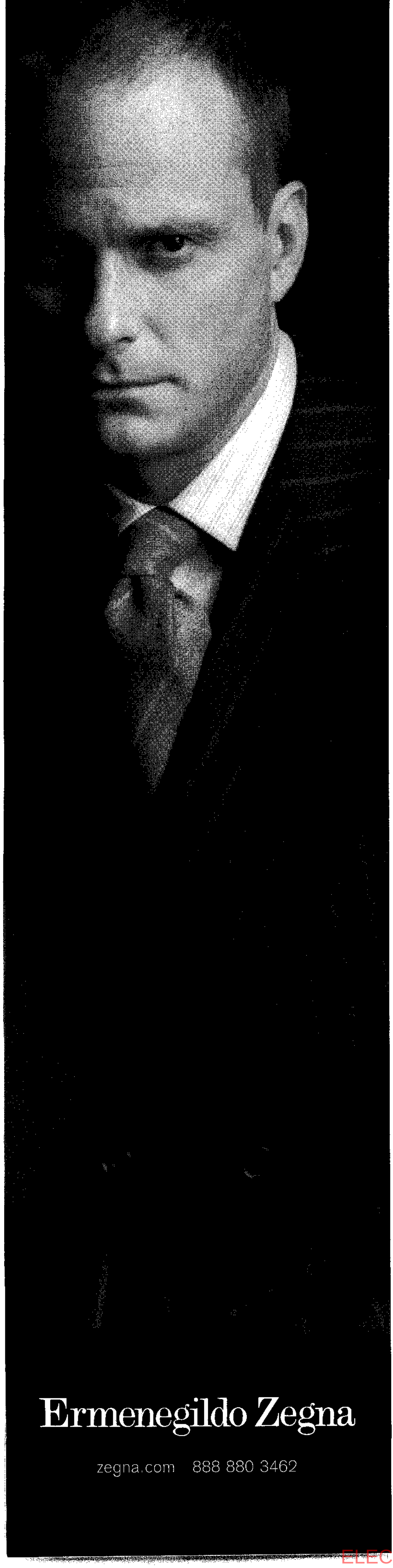

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wonderfully dotty Andrea Martin, Michael Constantine as the ouzo-swigging dad, and everyone's favorite ethnic mom, Lainie Kazan. They bring a pleasant sitcom buzz to the movie.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

NIGHT OF THE HUNTER

Despite its peculiar overtones of humor, this 1955 film is one of the most frightening movies ever made. Robert Mitchum is the murderous, sex-obsessed, hymn-singing soul-saver with hypnotic powers, and his terrified new wife (Shelley Winters), who has a boy and a little girl from an earlier marriage, becomes his fervent disciple. He is something of a Pied Piper in reverse: adults trust him, children try to escape. The two kids' flight from the madman is a mysterious, dreamlike episode—a deliberately "artistic" suspense fantasy, broken by the appearance of a Christian variety of fairy godmother (Lillian Gish). The adaptation of Davis Grubb's novel was James Agee's last film work, and this shadowy horror fable was the first and only movie directed by Charles Laughton; it was a total financial disaster, and he never got a chance to direct again.—*Pauline Kael* (Thalia Theatre; Sept. 4.)

ONE HOUR PHOTO

Robin Williams in serious mode, playing a nowhere man—Sy Parrish, the photo guy at the mall, who wears wire-frame glasses, a white shirt, and a tie clip that we're meant to take as a kind of emotional chastity belt. Sy becomes unhealthily obsessed with a young and beautiful suburban family—wayward father (Michael Vartan), good mom (Connie Nielsen), and adorable young son (Dylan Smith)—and plasters his wall at home with extra prints of their family snaps. Mark Romanek's psychological thriller features sterile white environments and lots of shots in which Williams is grimly isolated in sinister, sterile sets. The movie's experimental tone, however, doesn't disguise a rather low-grade and unpleasant form of suspense. Romanek is caught between making Sy dangerous and making him sympathetic, but any terror or pity we might feel gets crimped by the film's queasy narrative logic, which keeps us in the dark about Sy's nature right down to the unsatisfactory final scene.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

POSSESSION

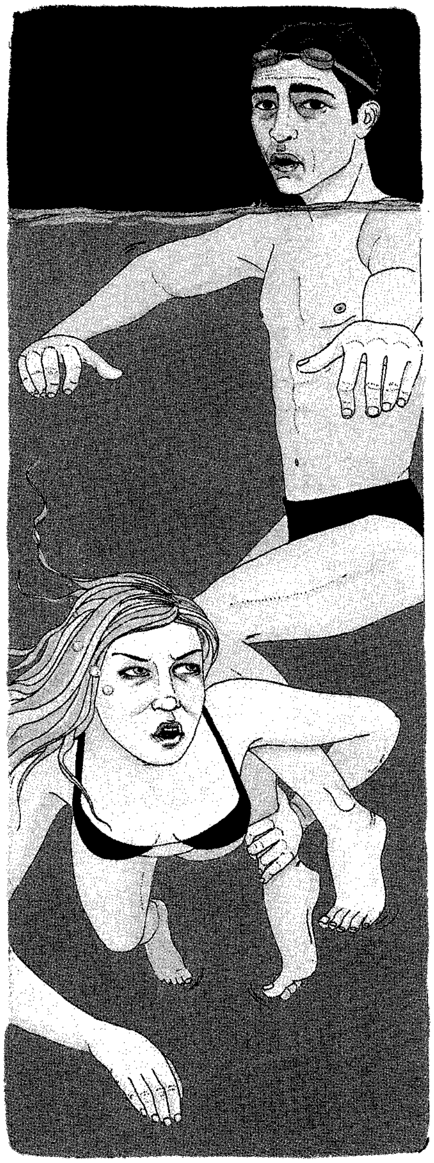
Neil LaBute's adaptation of A. S. Byatt's novel is disappointingly tepid. Two contemporary literary scholars, a coldly composed British professor (Gwyneth Paltrow) and a scruffy American graduate student (Aaron Eckhart), discover a cache of secret letters exchanged by the great (fictional) Victorian poet Randolph Henry Ash (Jeremy Northam) and an intriguing (fictional) minor poet, Christabel LaMotte (Jennifer Ehle). As the scholars track down evidence of a passionate, illicit love affair between the two poets, they experience their own, neurotic version of love, and LaBute cuts back and forth between past and present. The period re-creation is faultless, and the narrative technique very smooth, but the movie never works up much fire. Eckhart gives his best movie performance yet, but you know a film is in trouble when it seems like a frigid version of "The French Lieutenant's Woman."—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ROAD TO PERDITION

A solemnly beautiful art concept—which is not quite the same thing as a great movie. The talented English director Sam Mendes ("American Beauty"), along with his collaborators, the cinematographer Conrad L. Hall and the veteran costume designer Albert Wolsky, draw their visual ideas and moods from old movies and comic books, distilling the memory of crime fiction—rather than the memory of crime—into imagery that could not be more iconic. Tom Hanks plays a Depression-era Mob assassin, a family man with a small moustache and a stiff walk. He moves through a stylized world of fedoras, long dark coats, and thick-woven suits; there's also lots of rain coming straight down the way it did in noir movies of the forties and fifties. Visually, the picture is all of a piece, but it's a self-conscious work—all dark-toned academic classicism.—*D.D.* (7/15/02) (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

SATIN ROUGE

The heroine of the writer-director Raja Amari's intimate Tunisian drama is a lonely widow who lives within the conservative boundaries of her middle-class family. When she senses that her only daughter is about to begin a life of her own, circumstances lead her to explore the sensual world of late-night cabaret. Against her will, she's seduced by the liberating atmosphere and eventually becomes a belly dancer. This bare-bones story is told with such simplicity and verve, and the actress Hiyam Abbas plays her role with such shy dignity, that her act of self-discovery comes across as a joyful journey. In Arabic.—*B.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)



Erika Christensen and Jesse Bradford in "Swimfan," opening September 6.

THE SEVEN SAMURAI

Seven hired knights defend a village against forty mounted bandits—their pay a few handfuls of rice. This 1954 three-and-a-half-hour epic on violence and action—Akira Kurosawa's *masterpiece*—has been widely imitated, but no one has come near it. In Japanese.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Sept. 4-10.)

LARA TOMLIN

SIGNS
A third attempt, on the part of M. Night Shyamalan, to disturb our sleep. This time we are in rural Pennsylvania, home to Graham Hess (Mel Gibson), who used to be a minister and is now a farmer; the story is designed to make him wonder if that was such a smart move. First come the crop circles, then glimpses of green men vanishing into the corn. Hess is skeptical, but his brother (Joaquin Phoenix) and children (Abigail Breslin and Rory Culkin) are more seriously spooked, and with good cause; soon enough, it becomes clear that aliens have landed all over the world in search of human beings and other comforting snacks. Shyamalan takes it easy on the special effects; much of the movie, which skirts dangerously close to the uneventful in its need to draw out the suspense, consists merely of the family sitting around watching TV or waiting for a claw under the door. The ending is far too freighted with spiritual intent, yet, as with "The Sixth Sense," you can neither ignore nor forget the mist of sickly unease, streaked with black humor, that rises out of the plot.—*A.L.* (8/12/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SIMONE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

TADPOLE
A short but annoying film from Gary Winick, who brings us the astonishing news that teen-age boys want to make out with women three times their age. Oscar (Aaron Stanford) is fifteen, half-French, and wholly unappealing; nevertheless, he goes to bed with a chiropractor (Bebe Neuwirth) and hungers after his own stepmother (Sigourney Weaver), who vaguely returns the compliment. Some of the scenes, involving Oscar the hapless patsy rather than Oscar the hopeful swain, are smartly managed; others, like an overcooked sequence at Café Boulud, prove harder to stomach. The movie was shot on digital video, which means that most viewers will reach for their spectacles before realizing that the fuzz is not their fault. Only Bebe Neuwirth fans, a discerning crowd, will have a ball. She has never been so mean or, as a result, so hot to the touch.—*A.L.* (7/29/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Sunshine Cinema, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

TOUCH OF EVIL
As the madam of a Mexican bordello, Marlene Dietrich greets the grotesquely oversized, padded, false-nosed Orson Welles with a glorious understatement—"You're a mess, honey. You've been eating too much candy." When the final bullet punctures him and he is floating in the water like a dead whale, she eulogizes—"What can you say about anybody? He was some kind of a man. . . ." That may be one of the worst lines ever written or a parody of bad writing—the funeral scene in "Death of a Salesman." This marvellously garish 1958 thriller has something, but not very much, to do with drugs and police corruption in a border town. What it really has to do with is love of the film medium, and if Welles can't resist the candy of shadows and angles and baroque décor, he turns it into stronger fare than most directors' solemn meat and potatoes. It's a terrific entertainment. The cast, assembled as perversely as in a nightmare, includes Charlton Heston, Joseph Cotten, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Mercedes McCambridge, Janet Leigh, Dennis Weaver, Valentin De Vargas, Joan Moore, Harry Shannon, and Ray Collins.—*P.K.* (Thalia Theatre; Sept. 4.)

24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE
Tony Wilson, the Manchester music impresario who founded Factory records in the late seventies—home to Joy Division (later New Order) and Happy Mondays, among others—gets a fevered tribute in Michael Winterbottom's blast of a film. Wilson is played with a brilliant élan by British comic Steve Coogan—a standout performance that captures the dour enthusiasm of Wilson's genius. And Winterbottom's casting of the myriad musician roles is flawless; there isn't a hair style or a body type that seems out of place. The film's direction has the jittery anarchic feel of a good punk song, and the script displays a fast and free humor that indulges in the excesses of a rock-and-roll life.—*B.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 2, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

XXX
A slovenly rip-off of the James Bond formula, with Vin Diesel as Xander Cage, an extreme-sports athlete who is recruited into intelligence work. Diesel wears tattoos rather than a tuxedo, and eschews shaken-not-stirred alcoholic beverages. He's also rather less interested in sex than Bond. The movie's real draw is its explosions, which spread flames like ketchup across the easily ignited sets. With Martin Csokas caressing his swinish lines as a supervillain and Asia Argento as a witch-eyed shady lady. The movie was not directed; it was launched (by Rob Cohen), in the familiar corporate-schlock style of recent blockbusters, and there are long sequences in which the shots barely hang together.—*D.D.* (8/19 & 26/02) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE FAST RUNNER (ATANARJUAT)
59th Street East Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.

LOVELY & AMAZING
Empire 25 and Village East Cinemas.

MOSTLY MARTHA
Angelika Film Center and Paris.

SEX AND LUCIA
Sunshine Cinema.

SUNSHINE STATE (7/8/02)
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and 64th and 2nd.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.

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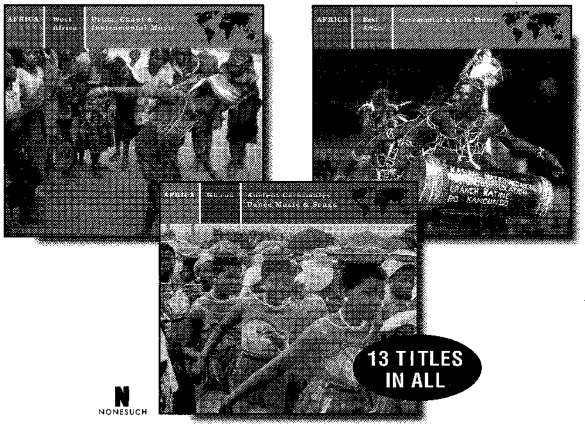
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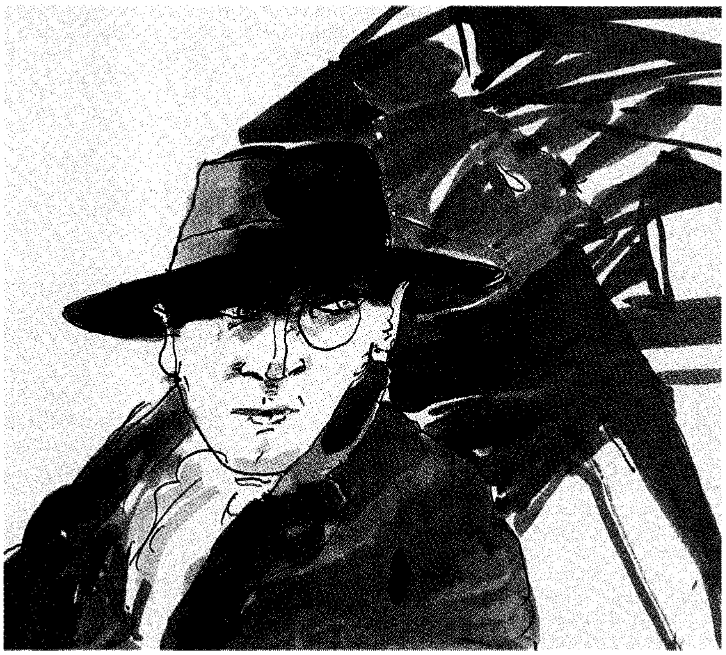
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Attack and Aftermath: Documenting September 11." Sept. 7-8 at 12:30: "Circling Zero: We See Absence" (2002, Ken Jacobs). ♦ Sept. 7-8 at 3: "In Memoriam: New York City, 9/11" (2002, HBO). ♦ Sept. 7-8 at 4:30: "7 Days in September" (2002, Steven Rosenbaum). ♦ Repertory night. Sept. 7-8 at 6:30: "Barry Lyndon" (1975, Stanley Kubrick).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Sept. 5-6 at 7, Sept. 7 at 5 and 9, and Sept. 8 at 7: "Germany Year Zero" (1947, Roberto Rossellini; in German). ♦ Sept. 5-6 at 8:45, Sept. 7 at 7, and Sept. 8 at 5 and 9: "Germany Nine Zero" (1991, Jean-Luc Godard; in French) and "Night and Fog" (1956, Alain Resnais). ♦ Starting Sept. 6: "Wings of Desire: Italian Divas & Modern Women, 1900-1920." A series of silent films that explore the status of women in Italian culture before and after the First World War.



MADE IN THE U.S.A. *When the German director Fritz Lang first came to America, in 1924, he glimpsed the spires of Manhattan, the inspiration for "Metropolis." When he returned in 1933, fleeing the Nazis, he polished his English and promptly made "Fury," a vivid, daring drama about lynching. All of Lang's Hollywood productions (some of them rarely screened) are being shown in a series at* BAM *Rose Cinemas.*

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BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Repertory favorites. Sept. 5 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30 and Sept. 6 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars" (1973, D. A. Pennebaker). ♦ Sept. 7-8: Selections from the New Festival, which features lesbian and gay films from around the world. See www.bam.org for a complete schedule. ♦ The American cinema of Fritz Lang. Sept. 9 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "House by the River" (1949). ♦ Sept. 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "While the City Sleeps" (1956).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Sept. 12: "Kurosawa & Mifune," a retrospective of the director-actor team. Sept. 4-10 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "The Seven Samurai" (†).

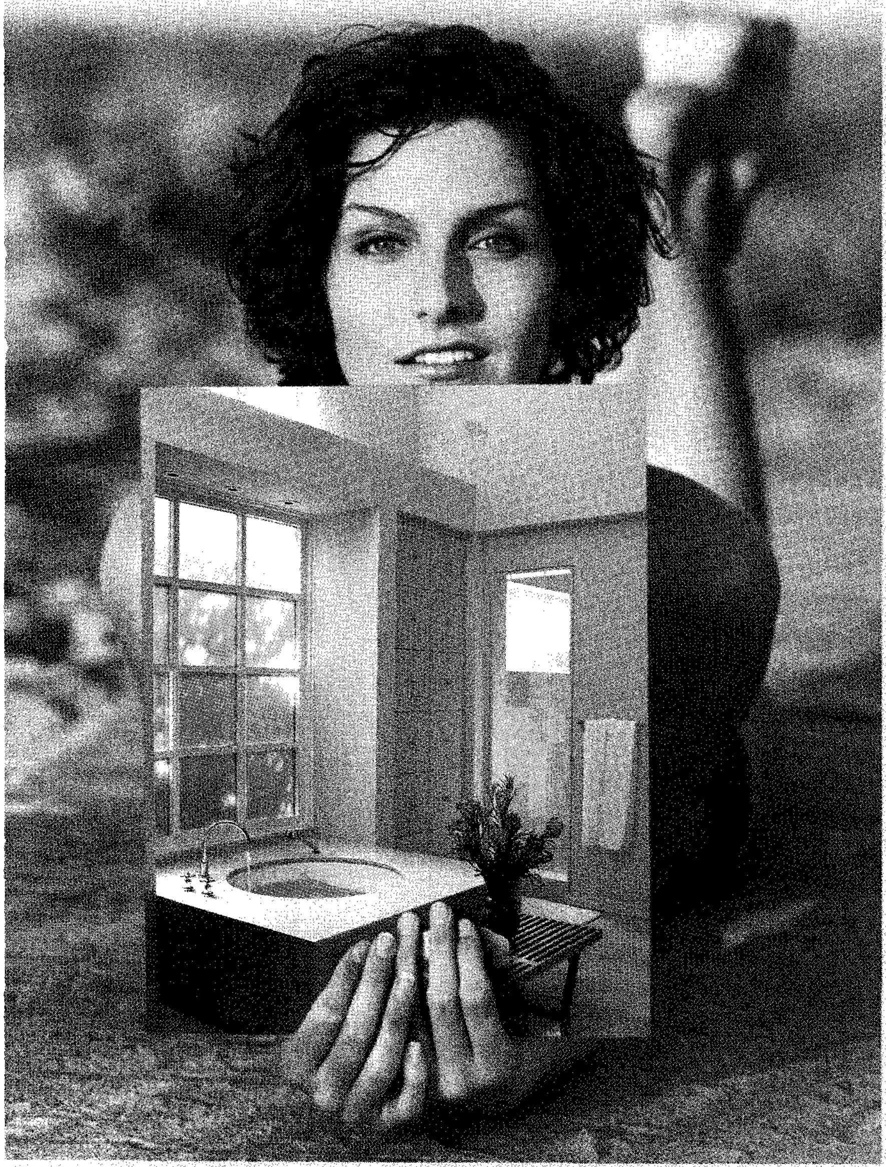
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through Dec. 17: "Neo-Noir: Another Shade of Darkness." Sept. 10 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Deadlier Than the Male" (1956, Julien Duvivier; in French).

PIONEER THEATER
155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300)—Sept. 4-10: "Ace in the Hole" (1951, Billy Wilder).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Sept. 6-7: "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Sept. 4 at 7: "Touch of Evil" (†). ♦ Sept. 4 at 9:15: "Night of the Hunter" (†). ♦ Sept. 5 at 7: "Yeelen (Brightness)" (1987, Souleymane Cissé; in Bambara and French). ♦ Sept. 5 at 9: "Xica" (1976, Carlos Diegues; in Portuguese). ♦ Sept. 6 at 7: "All About My Mother" (1999, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ Sept. 6 at 9: "Kika" (1993, Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ Sept. 7 at 2: "Shoah: Part I" (1985, Claude Lanzmann; in French). ♦ Sept. 7-8 at 7:30: "Underground" (1995, Emir Kusturica; in Serbo-Croatian and German). ♦ Sept. 8 at 2: "Shoah: Part II" (1985, Lanzmann; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Sept. 12: "Whispers in a Distant Corridor: The Cinema of Jacques Tourneur." Sept. 4 at 1, 4:45, and 8:30: "The Fearmakers" (1958). ♦ Sept. 4 at 2:45 and 6:30 and Sept. 6 at 3 and 7: "Stars in My Crown" (1950). ♦ Sept. 5 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Cat People" (1942). ♦ Sept. 5 at 2:45, 6:15, and 9:30: "I Walked with a Zombie" (1943). ♦ Sept. 6 at 1, 5, and 9 and Sept. 7 at 6:45: "Canyon Passage" (1946). ♦ Sept. 7 at 1 and 4:45 and Sept. 8 at 9: "Experiment Perilous" (1944). ♦ Sept. 7 at 3 and 8:45 and Sept. 8 at 3: "Stranger on Horseback" (1955). ♦ Sept. 8 at 1 and 5 and Sept. 9 at 1 and 4:30: "Berlin Express" (1948). ♦ Sept. 8 at 6:45 and Sept. 9 at 2:45 and 6:15: "Easy Living" (1949). ♦ Sept. 10 at 1: "They All Come Out" (1939). ♦ Sept. 10 at 2:45: "Phantom Raiders" (1940). ♦ A tribute to Darryl F. Zanuck. Sept. 9 at 8: "How Green Was My Valley" (1941, John Ford).



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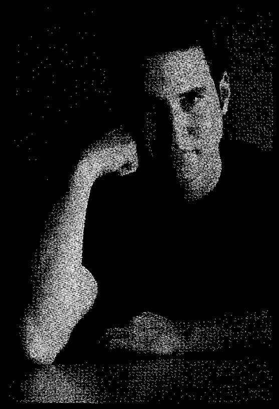
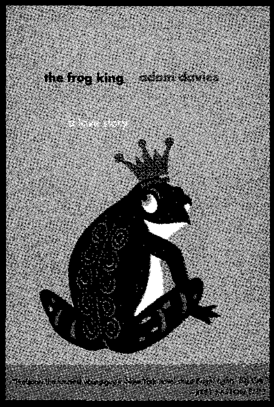
Author Focus: Adam Davies, 30, attended Kenyon College and received his M.F.A. degree from Syracuse University. After working in New York, he taught creative writing at the University of Georgia. His début novel "The Frog King" (Riverhead Trade Paperbacks; $13.00) will reach bookstores this month. He is currently on leave from the university and at work on his second novel.





Bacardi O introduces Adam Davies, a new author whose bold, confident début novel, "The Frog King," tells the story of Harry Driscoll, a brilliant-but-bumbling young editor, treacherous boyfriend, and puzzle to his wealthy parents.

Original in its concept and powerful in its writing, "Frog King" turns an old fairytale into a new fable for our times. "Frog King" is also a story of transformation. "It's a love story—about this woman, about Harry's ability to love himself and feel okay about himself, the girl, and the city," says Davies, who followed the path less travelled to devote four years to crafting the tale.

Now, thanks to a Bacardi O sponsored reading this month, the book is likely to attract an even wider audience of hip readers. (Don't be surprised to see them quaffing O Cosmopolitans as they listen in.)

"Can someone who's so unappealing change into someone beautiful and good?" is the question Davies poses. The answer is revealed in his fast-paced and funny novel that uses vocabulary as rich as Driscoll is poor. "I personally love language," says Davies, who enjoys reading before an audience. "Rare and beautiful words are like orphans. They need homes, and I want to give them the attention and love that they deserve."

As darkly handsome as he is expressive, Davies credits among his influences writers as diverse as Tom Waits and Bob Dylan, Oscar Wilde, Edward Albee, Michael Chabon, Anita Loos, Jay McInerney, and Bret Easton Ellis.

"This whole thing is astonishing to me," Davies admits. "As a writer, you work in solitude for years. And then, suddenly, someone likes you." From the early reviews, it's apparent a lot of people like Adam Davies, and appreciate what he has to say about being young and making it in the city. And that's no fairy tale.

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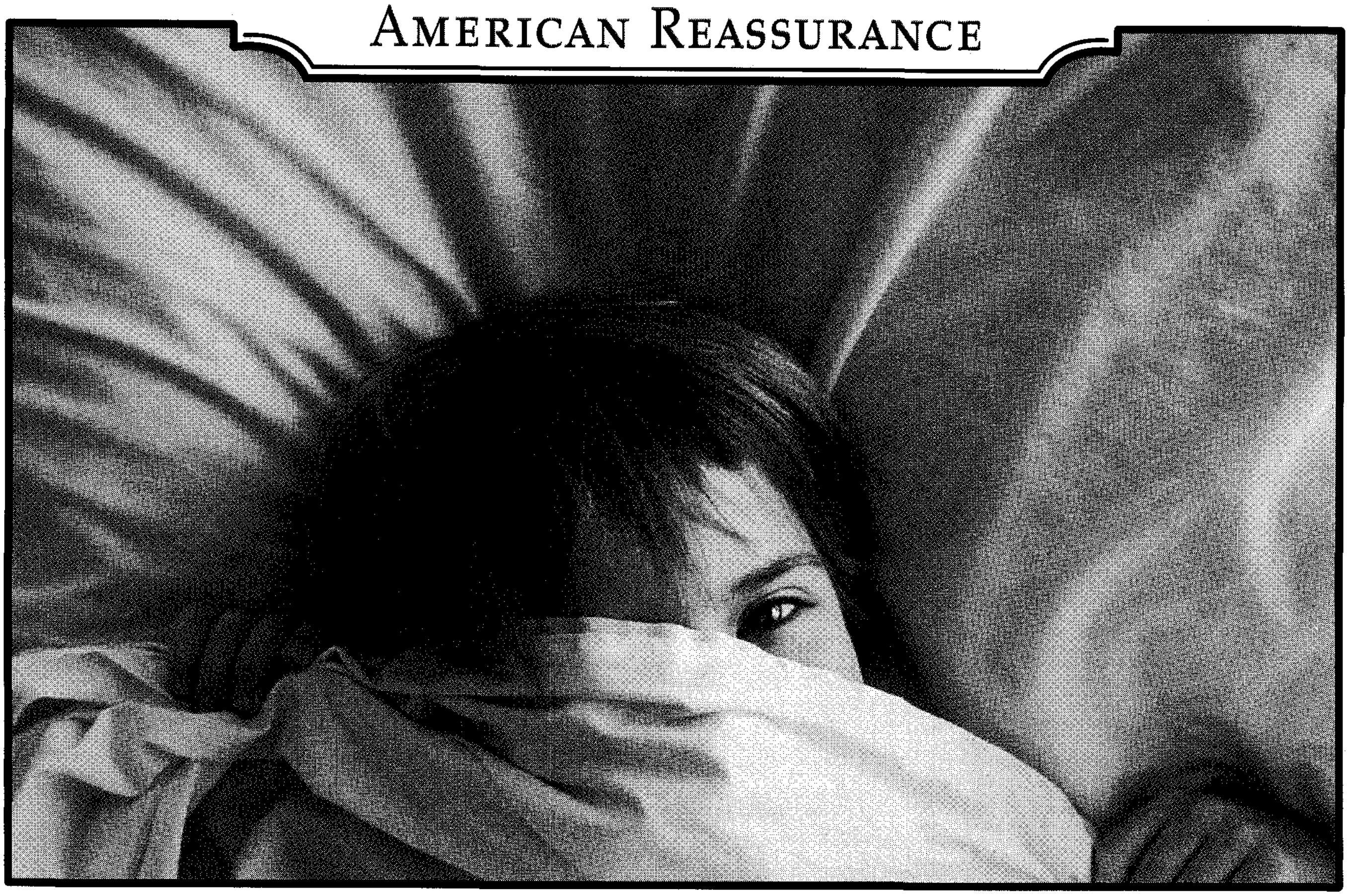

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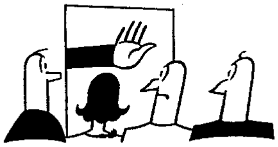
THE
NEW YORKER

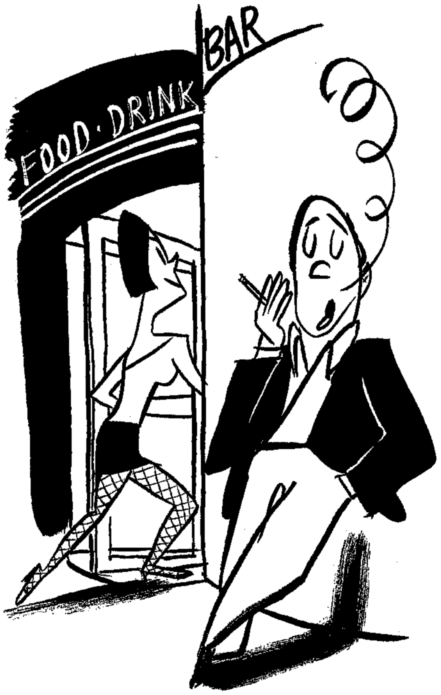
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
BLOOMBERG BUTTS IN



You might suppose, at first thought, that the opposition to Mayor Bloomberg's recent proposal for a complete ban on smoking in bars and restaurants would be both passionate and powerful. Like the owners of guns, the consumers of cigarettes are so attached to their cylindrical objects of desire that they are willing to court death for them. And there are more than a million cigarette smokers of voting age in this city. This is a figure that might be expected to give pause even to a politician as unconventional as our billionaire Republicrat mayor. It's about the same as the number of rent-controlled and rent-stabilized apartments, and although these programs have their own equivalent of secondhand smoke—to wit, the fact that everybody else's rent is a little bit higher on account of them—rent control and rent stabilization are sacred cows. Ciggies are oxen to be gored at will.

The assent of the City Council will be required to change the current law, which, while forbidding smoking in restaurants that seat more than thirty-five patrons, exempts stand-alone bars and the bar areas of restaurants as long as they're separately ventilated. But the general expectation seems to be that the Council will go along. The opposition, which a year ago included the then-Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, and was strong enough to block a somewhat weaker proposal, has diminished to a point where it is almost as feeble as the arguments it tries to muster. The tobacco lobby, for all its fearsome power on Capitol Hill, doesn't swing a lot of weight at the local level, where voters can smell their representatives' breath, and in New York City Big Tobacco is about as popular as the National Rifle Association. The Empire State Restaurant and Tavern Association, which is the bar owners' lobby, plans to put up a fight, but its formerly staunch ally, the New York State Restaurant Association, has been showing signs of going wobbly. The *Post*, in an editorial the other day, lamented what it called Bloomberg's "zealotry" and denounced his proposal, with apparently unconscious humor, as "overkill." But the paper's tone was one of resignation in the face of the inevitable: "That's the way such things work in New York: Social change is engineered by taxing and regulating a product well beyond the bounds seen elsewhere." (The *Post's* "elsewhere" evidently excludes the two states, Delaware and California, and the seventy-odd other municipalities that already bar barroom butts.)



The taxing part is a fait accompli. On June 30th, the Mayor signed a bill upping the city's cigarette levy from eight cents a pack to a dollar-fifty, which, on top of the state tax (another dollar-fifty), has raised the price of a pack of cigarettes here to around seven dollars and fifty cents, the highest in the country. This being New York, where what might be called compassionate liberalism still has a toehold, there were objections that the new cigarette tax is hardest on the poor—as, indeed, it is, on account of smoking's being more prevalent at the lower end of the economic scale. But this is a better argument for making income taxes more progressive or for retaining inheritance taxes than it is for going easy on the coffin nails. (The cigarette tax, by the way, is the real death tax.) Besides, even if the poor pay more

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

when cigarette taxes go up, they also benefit more, as do members of minority groups. In 1998, the federal government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, after analyzing fourteen years' worth of health data, concluded that lower-income smokers quit in higher numbers than do upper-income ones when the price goes up. The effect is more dramatic among young blacks and Hispanics. "Even after analyses control for income and other variables," the C.D.C. reported in its trademark vivid style, "it is estimated that about one quarter of eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-old Hispanic smokers and approximately ten percent of eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-old black smokers would quit smoking altogether in response to a ten percent price increase, whereas only about one percent of white smokers of the same age would quit." In New York, thanks to the new taxes, the price increase this year has been more than twenty per cent. Cigarettes are finally becoming financially what they are medically—an expensive habit. In 1975, a pack of cigarettes could be had for hardly more than twice the cost of a daily newspaper. Now it's ten times as much. At these prices, a pack and a half a day will cost you upward of four thousand dollars a year, plus your life.

Maybe the real reason smokers don't do more to resist the indignities society heaps upon them—the taxes, the sidewalk banishments, the reproaches—is that they're secretly grateful. As anyone who has ever been or known one can attest, a smoker is simply a person who would like to quit smoking. In their cups, even the hardest of the hard core—Fleet Street hacks, French academics, truck-stop waitresses, plainclothes cops—will admit that they'd just as soon be free of their addiction. This is not to say that they don't enjoy it. Few pleasures are as reliable, as intimate, and as portable as smoking a cigarette, and the pleasure goes well beyond the stimulative effect of nicotine. Ideas abound as to why this should be so: the Bogart-cum-Garbo glamour of the thing (now much diminished); the comfort of having one's own little campfire; the reassuring ritual of matches, lighters, and finger play; and so on. In "Cigarettes Are Sublime" (1993), a cult classic of the literature of tobacco, Richard Klein connects the allure of cigarettes precisely to their dangers, which entice smokers "to the edge of the abyss, where, like travelers in a Swiss landscape, they can be thrilled by the subtle grandeur of the perspectives on mortality opened by the little terrors in every puff." Well, that's one theory. Here's another: smoking is a sinister form of breath yoga. Many smokers know that the only time they breathe deeply and mindfully, bringing this normally automatic process into the light of consciousness, is when they take a drag on a cigarette. The smoke makes the breath visible, and the acrid heat makes it palpable. A cigarette is simply a forty-cent yoga class, with Darth Vader as the teacher.

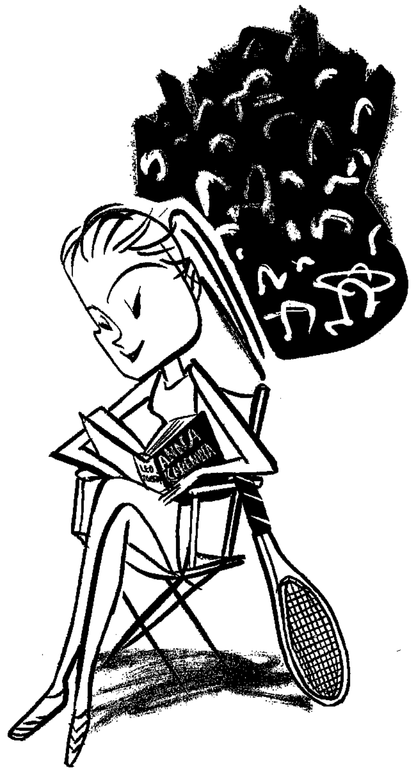
If virtue is its own reward, then surely smoking is its own punishment. (The death penalty is applied much more surely and much more frequently—and not much less swiftly—for smoking than for murder. Makes you wonder about the deterrent effect of capital punishment.) But smokers need all the help they can get, and Mayor Bloomberg, an ex-smoker himself, is trying to oblige. Every new annoyance he contrives to come up with—one more dollar or two for a pack, one less place where smoking is permitted—increases the likelihood that a given smoker will finally say the hell with it. Smokers, as much or more than nonsmokers, are the true beneficiaries of the Mayor's crusade. All they have to do is quit, and he'll leave them in peace.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

HAPPY FAMILIES DEPT.
OPENOVA

As the Williams sisters shot relentlessly toward titledom at the U.S. Open last week, the Russian competition spent their time, when not playing or practicing, in the players' lounge, eating yogurt and pizza. They were fast out of the gate in Round One: nine of them were winners.

The advancing Russians, almost all with two-handed backhands and hearty first serves, were Elena Dementieva, twenty; Vera Zvonareva, seventeen; Anastasia Myskina, twenty-one; Svetlana Kuznetsova, seventeen; Elena Bovina, nineteen; Elena Likhovtseva, twenty-six; Tatiana Panova, twenty-six; Anna Smashnova, twenty-six (who is actually from Belarus); and Dinara Safina, sixteen, the latest of the "ovas," "evas," and "inas" to turn pro.



Dinara Safina

Safina is five feet eleven and a half inches tall and still growing, and, like most of her colleagues, she has big blue eyes and blond hair in a ponytail. Her older brother, Marat Safin, is seeded second in the tournament, and she seems to have taken on his jocky swagger. Her mother, Rausa Islanova, has been her coach, and her father, Misha Safin, is the director of a tennis club in Moscow.

The other day, Safina rocked coolly into the players' lounge after a practice, followed by her mother. Instead of a tennis racquet, Safina was carrying a copy of "Anna Karenina," in Russian. "I just started reading this book," she said. She opened the book to the first page and pointed to the first line—"I read already, 'Happy families all alike; every unhappy family unhappy in own way.' I did not read more yet, so I do not know yet if I

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like Tolstoy. I must read book for school, special school I am in, when we go to live in Valencia, Spain, where it is warm, good for tennis. I study only Russian, English, and mathematics. I will know, maybe, if I like Tolstoy." She gave a Russian shrug. Rausa Islanova pursed her lips and nodded, somewhat sadly.

"My family is good, happy family," Safina went on. "Marat is good brother. Sometimes I go watch him practice. I don't see him watch me when I practice. My mom watches me, she says, 'Move your legs!' "

Elsewhere in the lounge, brother Marat was perched on the back of a couch, where three buddies of his, looking cranky and unkempt, were sprawled. Among them was the Swiss player Marc Rosset, who looked half asleep. The subject under discussion, in Russian, and also in Spanish, was when-the-hell-are-we-gonna-get-a-court-to-practice-on. Safin, impatient and grim, jumped from his perch and made as if to leave.

"He's a big tiger now," Rosset said calmly, in English. "He just told me that once, ten years ago, when I played a tournament in Moscow, he was my ball boy. Just now, he told me this." The other buddies laughed loudly.

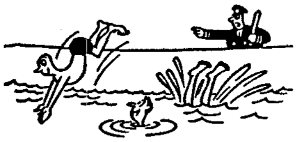
Svetlana Kuznetsova arrived in the lounge, sweaty and distraught—she was late for an appointment. She hugged a carrying case in which sat an immaculately groomed Yorkshire terrier with a tiny blue ribbon in its hair. "I had problems with Patrick," she said. "Patrick is Dementieva's dog. Dementieva had to practice. But they wouldn't let Dementieva take the dog on court, so Dementieva ask me please, please take Patrick. So I had to find a basket, to hide him in, and I had trouble, such trouble, getting him into the lounge."

Kuznetsova had won qualifying matches to get into the draw. "I started tennis when I was six—everybody in Russia starts tennis at six or seven," she said. "I was born in Leningrad, that is again now St. Petersburg. Now I live in Barcelona, where weather is warm, where my family came when I was twelve. I was coached for a few years by Marat Safin's mother, but now I am coached by Emilio Sanchez, who is brother of Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, my best friend." She picked up the dog and began murmuring to him in Russian.

Unlike most of the others, Anna Smashnova has brown hair and a one-handed backhand. "I was born in Minsk, Belarus, but I moved with my family to Israel when I was fourteen," she said. "Officially here, I represent Israel. Everybody says to me, 'Smashnova! What a great name for a tennis player!' Everybody says the same thing. 'What a great name for a tennis player!' But I don't even know what 'Smash' means in Russian."

—*Lillian Ross*

EVERYBODY IN DEPT.
THE SWIMMERS



"When you swim in the Hudson, everyone thinks you're nuts, but native New Yorkers *really* think you're nuts," Teddy Jefferson said on a recent hot afternoon, while floating on his back in the river, off the Surfside Marina, at Chelsea Piers. It was high tide, and the water, warm, brackish, and buoyant, smelled of the sea. A tug's wake slapped at the pilings. "I don't like pools," he said. "I'm allergic to chlorine."

A few years ago, the Department of Environmental Conservation declared the Hudson swimmable (with some caveats), but Jefferson, as one of the founders of New York City's guerrilla swimming lobby, Swim the Apple, still meets with pockets of resistance. His wife, Ladan, for one. ("All the PCBs!" she says.) And the authorities, too. "One time when I went in," Jefferson said, "I was looking up and thinking, What the hell are all these helicopters doing so close to the water? Then a whole regatta—a police motorboat, Coast Guard cutters—came over to where I was swimming. I hauled myself out of the water. A fire engine and about three police cars pulled up to the end of the pier, and a platoon of people came running toward me." He turned out not to be the floater they'd been looking for.

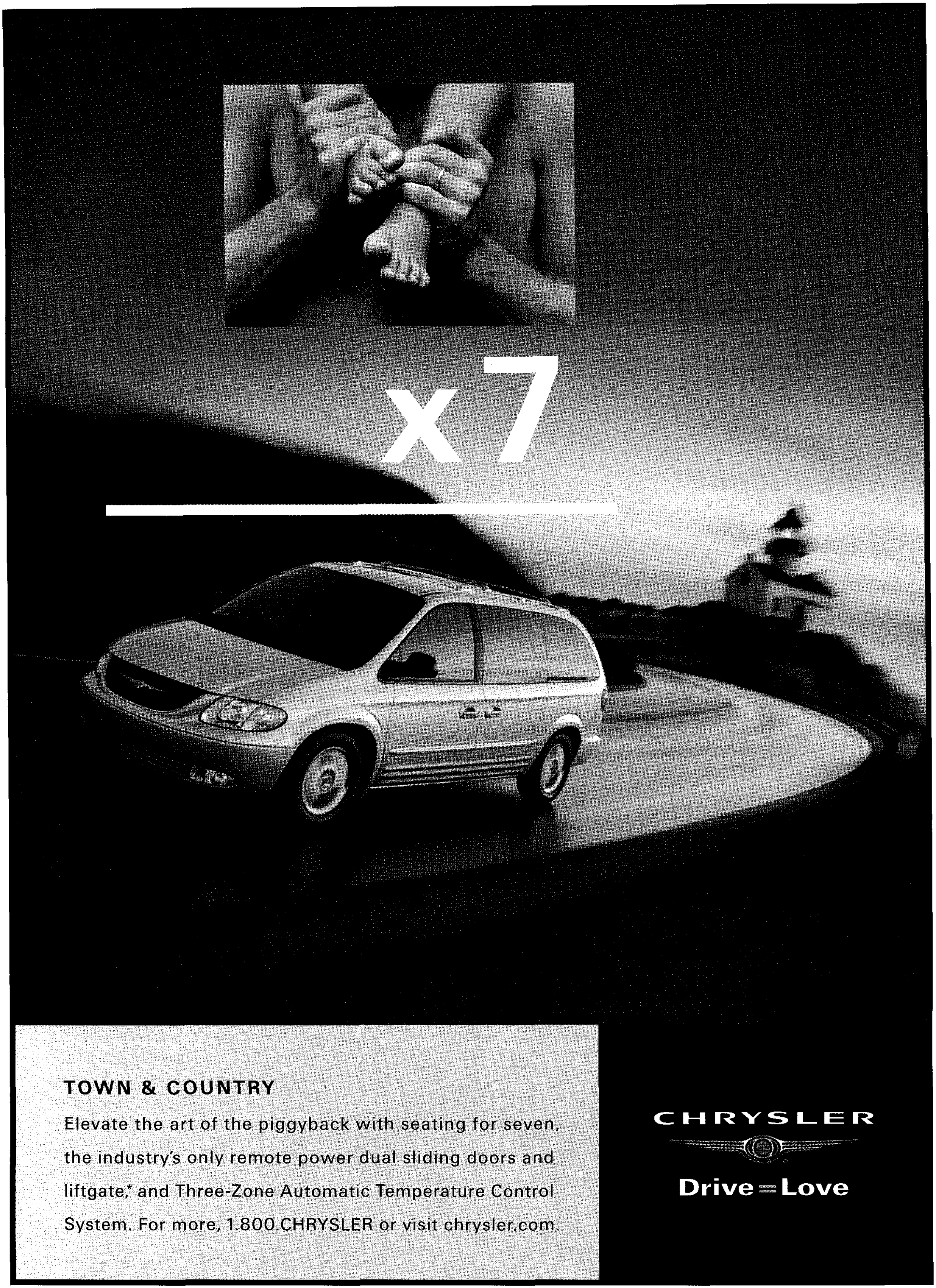
Jefferson, a playwright and a translator, has been swimming off the lower-Manhattan waterfront for the past six years and claims never to have got so much as a sore throat from it. He swims well into autumn—one year he kept at it until Thanksgiving. His territory takes in the piers of the lower West Side. Since many of those piers either are closed to the public or forbid swimming, reaching them often involves commando tactics: scouting out police, scaling fences, or sneaking past marina attendants. Jefferson carries a rope in his pocket, with a loop for his foot, which he fastens to the edge of the pier as a makeshift ladder.

After his swim at Chelsea Piers, Jefferson tried the Gansevoort Peninsula, a wide pier half a mile downtown that houses an old Department of Sanitation incinerator. "That's a good place for swimming," he said. "You walk out through all the trash trucks and then there's a little cobbled alleyway. It's very beautiful."

A few blocks upriver, Jefferson peered over a concrete barrier. "At the lowest low tides, you can see what kind of shit is under the water," he said. "Then you come back and swim at high tide. There's actually some old pilings under here. And a couple of cars."

If Jefferson is Swim the Apple's special-ops man, then a cardiac anesthesiologist named Mark Heath is its campaign manager and missionary spirit. Heath doesn't have to worry about legal water access; he just dives off his motorboat into the river. One evening last month, shortly after midnight, Heath was backstroking in the middle of New York Harbor. A school of ctenophores, stingless grape-size jellyfishy creatures, flashed like fireflies around him. A foghorn blew near the Statue of Liberty, and a Coast Guard cutter kept watch a few hundred yards away. "The middle of the harbor is one of my favorite swimming spots," Heath said. "It's the most improbable."

Heath runs Swim the Apple from his Upper West Side apartment. His war room is filled with tidal maps and charts and photos of classic swimming spots: Wards Island; Spuyten Duyvil; the Inwood cliffs; the Erie Basin, in Red Hook; Pier 63, in Chelsea; the Kill Van Kull, off Staten Island. Swim the Apple is dedicated to getting New Yorkers into the city's waters; its wish list includes the creation of a public beach on Governors Island and an armada of floating pools—like those which lined the Hudson a century ago. The organization recently acquired what it calls a "floating island," a plastic platform about the size of a flatbed truck, which it plans to fit



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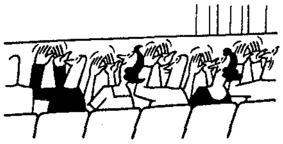
with a bench and an umbrella, and deploy up and down the river.

"Mark and I would go as the swimming lobby to waterfront-planning meetings," Jefferson said. "They thought we were kooks, but there's lots of kooks in these meetings. We argued that a river park needs access to the river. Look at what the Ganges—not a clean river—means to the Indian city of Varanasi. All along the river there's these ghats, staircases into the water. Every morning, people wash in the water. They swim. They do their prayers. They clean their clothes. They clean their hair. They water their animals. There's no reason you can't have a border like that between the river and New York City."

—*Field Maloney*

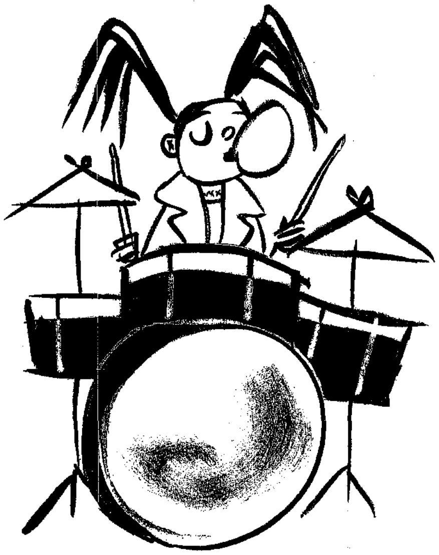
DO-RE-MI DEPT.
CLUB TRIP TO N.Y., 2002



Rachel Trachtenburg moved to Manhattan in July, after spending her entire life in Seattle. Like most eight-year-old girls, Rachel didn't move for a job or a boyfriend or because she needed a change of scenery. She moved because her parents decided that the family's musical-variety act, the Trachtenburg Family Slideshow Players, deserved a bigger audience than Seattle could provide.

The Trachtenburg Family Slideshow Players came into being two years ago, when Rachel's mother, Tina, who dyes her hair a bright pinkish-red and favors boxy vintage polyester dresses and spray-painted shoes, came home from an estate sale with an old slide projector. At the time, the Trachtenburgs were supporting themselves with a dog-walking business. At another estate sale, Tina found a box of old family-vacation slides, which were labelled "Mountain Trip to Japan, 1959." The next day, Jason Trachtenburg, Rachel's father, a struggling singer-songwriter, sat down at his Casio keyboard and wrote a tune (called "Mountain Trip to Japan, 1959," naturally) with lyrics that provided a story to accompany the slides. A couple of months later, the band—Jason on piano and vocals, Tina working the slide projector, and Rachel on harmonica—played at an open-mike night at a local club. Soon Rachel switched to drums, and the Trachtenburgs had discovered that elusive ingredient—like making Michael the focal point of the Jackson 5—which propels a band to greatness. They began scouring the city for boxes of old family-vacation slides and composing songs to go with them. By the time the Trachtenburgs left Seattle, they were arguably the best-known local act of the new millennium.

Onstage, Rachel Trachtenburg evokes both the "E.T."-era Drew Barrymore and Meg White of the White Stripes. She is at least as good a drummer as many indie rockers playing today, and her shuffling, occasionally mistimed approach is perfectly suited to her father's atonal singing and preciously weird lyrics ("This vacation spot is very wholesome / Suitable for Dick Enberg and Merlin Olsen"). While performing, Rachel seems to vacillate between mild exasperation and normal eight-year-old boredom. (Between songs during a recent Saturday-night show at Fez, she tried explaining to her parents what was wrong with the slide projector, which had started to malfunction. When they didn't listen to her, she sighed—unintentionally, it seemed—into the mike. The audience laughed adoringly.) Jason Trachtenburg, who looks and acts like Rick Moranis at his most frenetic, has a tendency to bookend bad jokes with lines like "Are you ready for this?" and "Thank you very much." Rachel heralds his worst ripostes with perfectly executed rim shots. She has a wide, expansive face. In the band's publicity photos, it's Rachel who is featured front and center, her head cocked slightly to one side as she blows a small bubble of gum.



Rachel Trachtenburg

"I like New York better than Seattle," Rachel said recently as she sat on the couch of the East Village apartment her family is subletting from some jazz musicians who decided to move to Amsterdam. "It's bigger. I was really sad when I left, because I miss my friends, but I call them almost every day, and I have friends here now." One of Rachel's new friends is her neighbor Scarlett, who is nine and also plays the drums.

As Rachel was talking, she was drawing pictures of flowers and drum sets with her collection of Hello Kitty colored pens. One picture was titled "Girl Drommer." "I like ABBA and the Beatles and Led Zeppelin," she said. "And E.L.O. and Funkadelic." She paused. "Wait. Mommy, are they the same thing?"

Jason Trachtenburg was sitting at the kitchen table trying to decide how many of the band's T-shirts he had to order. "Dad, this time you need to order smalls," Rachel said. "You're always wrong about ordering. You always say we need mediums and larges, but girls like smalls." Rachel rolled her eyes and went back to drawing.

The Trachtenburgs say that one of their goals is to get on Conan O'Brien's or David Letterman's show by the end of the year. In the meantime, the trio has a fall residency booked at the Ars Nova Theatre, in midtown. On Tuesday nights, the band will host a vaudeville show (Janeane Garofalo and Rich Hall have signed on). And on Thursday nights they'll do their own set.

Rachel is quietly confronting her growing fame. She spends more and more time after shows signing Trachtenburg Family T-shirts. Jason, who views his work as being part political commentary and part slapstick (one six-song "rock opera" is based on a series of slides from a twenty-five-year-old McDonald's strategy presentation), wants to be "huge." Rachel doesn't have such grand ambitions. "I might want to be in a movie one day," she says. "Or plays. I really like 'Annie.'"

—*Seth Mnookin*

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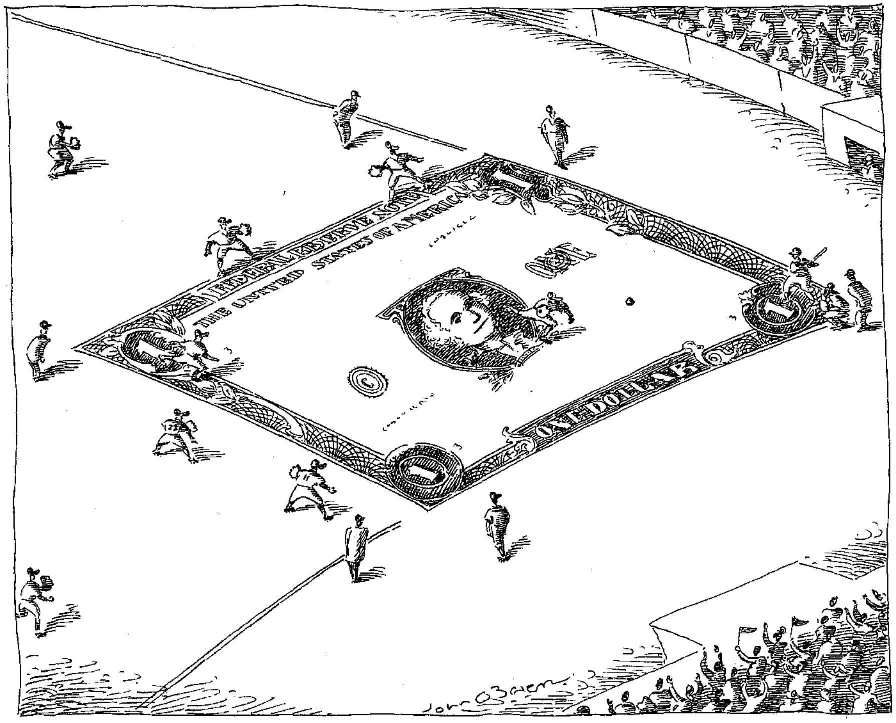

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DEPT. OF ENERGY

BLOCKING AND CHOWING

If you are an offensive lineman, the Netherlands cafeteria, at Hofstra University, in Hempstead, where the New York Jets hold their training camp, has a couple of things going for it: the portions are unlimited, and the food doesn't cost anything. "Shit, if it's free it's for me, you know what I'm saying?" Randy Thomas said recently, dipping a piece of fried chicken into a puddle of blue-cheese dressing during his lunch break, between practices. Thomas, the Jets' starting right guard, has a fast metabolism, and he weighs three hundred pounds; his appetite can be expensive. "I'm known to eat, like, seventeen pieces of chicken," he says. "By the way I eat, you would think I'm a big fat slob. But I just keep myself lean."

"Lean" is a relative term in the Brobdingnagian world of an N.F.L. cafeteria. Thomas is not quite the largest of the men who, for the past month, have lumbered into the Netherlands four times a day, like trucks rolling up to a gas station, dressed in sleeveless T-shirts, green shorts, and sandals, with their ankles, knees, and elbows wrapped in tape. Jumbo Elliott—"still the biggest guy on earth," according to the Jets' head coach, Herman Edwards—is three inches taller; Kareem McKenzie is twenty-five pounds heavier. But Thomas is the undisputed king of consumption, and when he pushes back his chair, raising his arms above his head after polishing off a plate of pecan pie, he reveals an ample midsection.

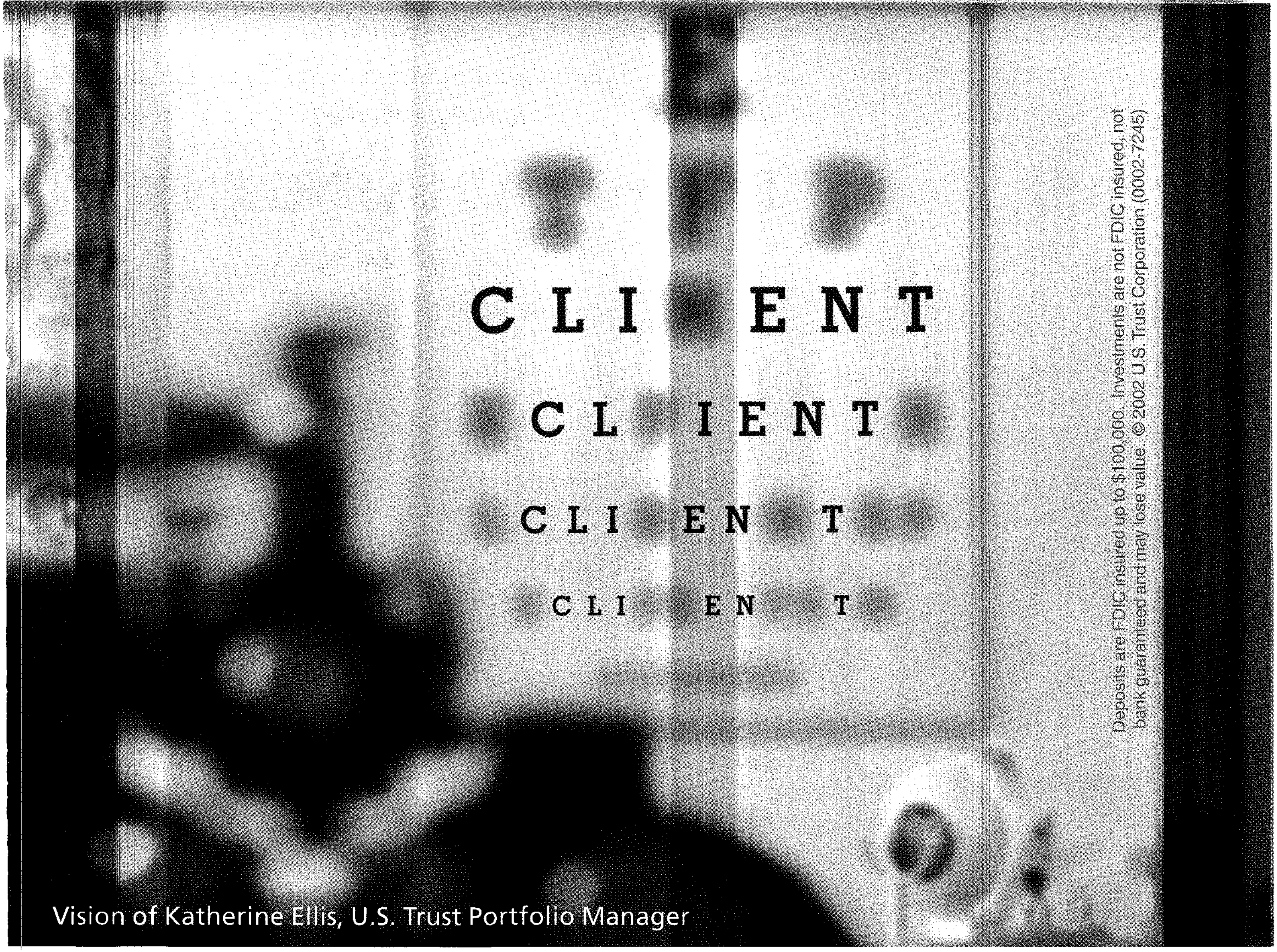
While there is no direct meal-by-meal oversight of Jets players' dining habits, the strength-and-conditioning coach, John Lott, has a few basic recommendations for some of his bigger, hungrier charges: avoid fried foods and sweets; drink water instead of soda. To this end, the cafeteria menu, prepared by the team trainer and a certified nutritionist, is color-coded by fat content: green for lentil soup; yellow for a mesquite-turkey club; red for meatloaf with gravy or fish and chips. Thomas was unaware of these traffic signals, but would probably not have heeded them anyway. "I don't worry about my fat," he says. "I just fuckin' eat. It makes me happy and comfortable and relaxed, you know? 'Cause if I'm hungry on the field I don't perform—I'm thinking about fuckin' eatin'."

Once the season begins, this week, the players are on their own for dinner—and for the all-important late-night "snack," which for Thomas means a dozen wings and eight fried jumbo chicken fingers. (The team continues to provide a buffet breakfast and lunch every day.) And while Thomas and his teammates savor the cafeteria grub—"These goddam chicken tenders are good, boy. They're addictive. They're so goddam *crunchy*"—they spend a certain amount of time at the training table trading restaurant tips for steakhouses and all-you-can-eat buffets. Major's Steak House, on Long Island, is one favorite, and East-West, an all-you-can-eat Chinese restaurant in New Jersey, is another; Thomas ran afoul of the management at East-West two years ago when he put away sixteen lobster tails. ("I've fucked up some buffets, man," Thomas says.)

Coach Lott was a player himself, so he understands the urge to eat after a hard-fought game. (In his playing days, he weighed as much as three hundred and seven pounds.) "I really strongly advise the guys to go to town one night a week," he says. "If you hamstring them and say, 'Don't eat this' or 'Don't eat that,' you will find a guy at three o'clock in the morning with a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken eating all he can because he's just going stir crazy." Still, Lott tries to set guidelines: "Instead of getting a Big Mac, get the grilled-chicken sandwich. And, hey, if you want a milkshake, get your milkshake."

In past years, the team has scheduled a series of educational seminars with the nutritionist, to recommend healthier alternatives to fast food. This season, the Jets are testing a new, more pro-active approach: house calls. "Not everyone's married, and they don't live with their moms, so they're by themselves," Coach Lott said. "I'm going to have a couple of ladies cook prepared meals and bring them to their house. It's not going to be a lady preparing them sundaes; it's going to be a balanced meal." So far, four players have signed up (Randy Thomas, who is married, is not among them), but Lott expects more players to request lady service once the word spreads. "They won't have to think about it," he said. "They just go home and eat."

—*Ben McGrath*



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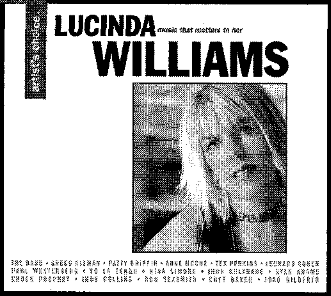

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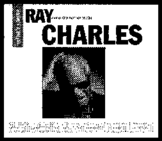

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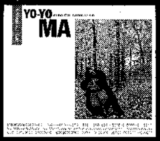

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ANNALS OF LAW

THE MAN CHASING ENRON

Why America's C.E.O.s hate Bill Lerach.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

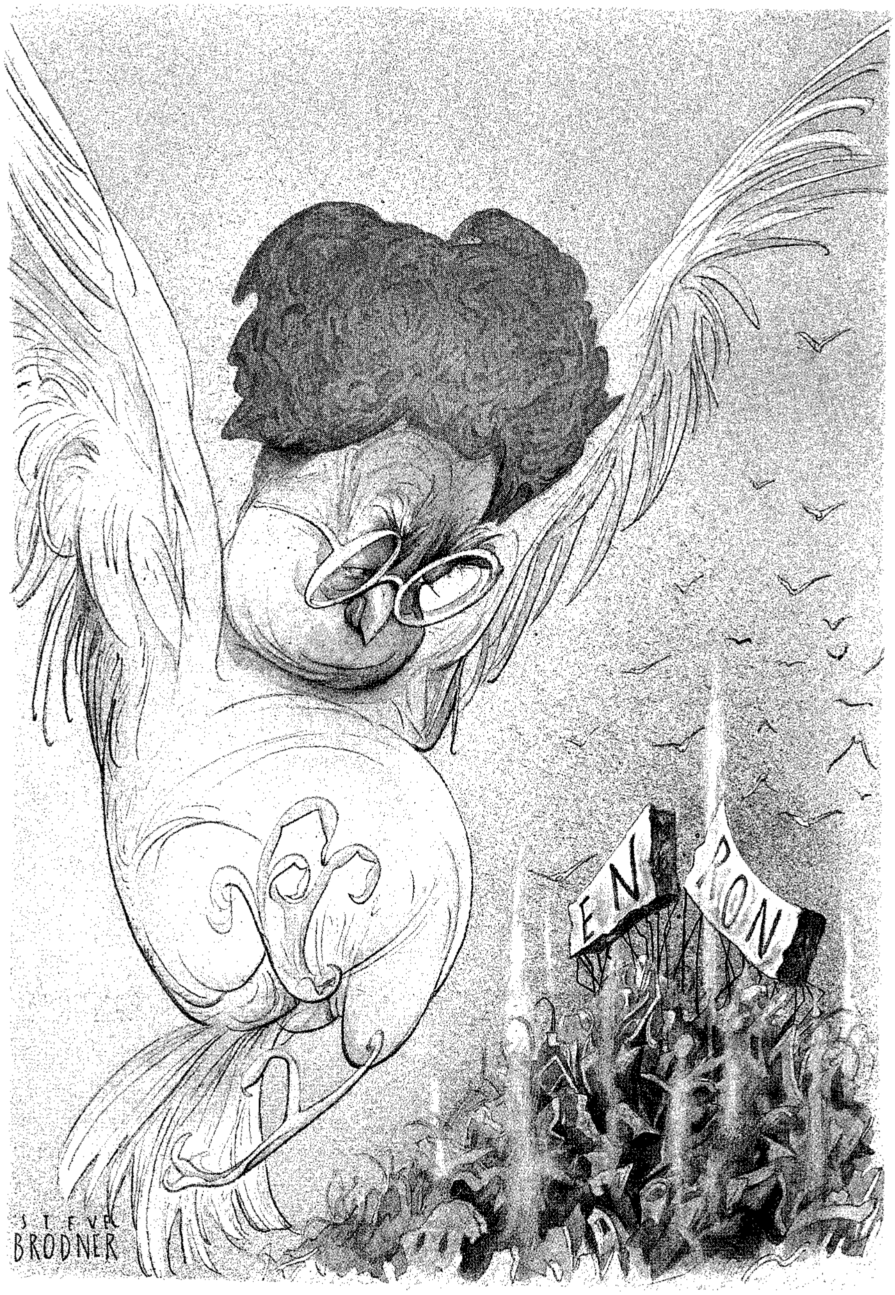
On the morning of January 22nd, a lawyer named Bill Lerach got out of his van in front of the Houston federal courthouse and presented a cardboard box full of shredded documents to the cameras of a waiting press corps. At the time, the implosion of Enron was still leading the news, and Lerach had filed a lawsuit against the company on behalf of its aggrieved shareholders. "It's a smoking howitzer," Lerach told reporters that day. "It doesn't get any worse than this. Call the cops. Something has to be done here." The pictures of Lerach and the documents, which Enron employees purportedly had shredded, became an indelible image of the collapse of the energy-trading firm. "I thought I was going to be run over by the media," Lerach recalled months later. "Never underestimate the power of a physical exhibit."

Lerach, who has spent the last few decades suing corporate executives for lying to, cheating, and otherwise defrauding their shareholders, is probably the leading class-action lawyer in the country. He regards the Enron lawsuit as the most important case of his career. "This case sums up everything I've been saying about these companies for years," he told me happily. "I was right for ten years, and no one cared. In case after case, we pleaded that the analysts for the investment banks were corrupted. We pleaded that the accountants were corrupted by their consulting fees. These judges were incredulous. They threw us out. They said professionals would never behave that way. Well, we saw how they behaved, didn't we?"

For the past year or so, Lerach has shadowed the procession of corporate disasters. On August 20th, for example, his firm sued Martha Stewart, alleging that she dumped stock in her own company when she learned that she was going to be investigated for insider trading in shares of the biotech firm ImClone. To be sure, Lerach has lost a few of these cases, but even some of the defeats make him look farsighted. In November of 2000, he sued WorldCom; a federal judge in Mississippi dismissed the case last March—shortly before the company collapsed in an accounting scandal. In December of 1999, Lerach sued Tyco International, and a judge in New Hampshire turned him away last February—not long before that conglomerate had its own accounting scandal. But Lerach's goal is less about muckraking and more about the money to be made in his line of work. Even his public unveiling of the shredded documents in Houston revealed his multiple agendas. Lerach wanted to use the documents against Enron, but he also wanted to persuade the judge to designate his law firm's client the lead plaintiff in the case, and in that way earn tens of millions of dollars in legal fees.

Lerach has been reviled by his targets, many of which are highly reputable firms like Intel and Apple, which view him as little better than a skilled extortionist, using the legal system to harass them. But Lerach has lately become a hero of the political left; a recent story in *The Nation* suggested that he was "America's top corporate crime fighter." On the basis of the last decade or so, Lerach may have as great an influence on the regulation of public companies as Congress and the President, who, in a rare moment of bipartisanship, passed and signed the Sarbanes-Oxley bill; the new law would lengthen prison sentences for white-collar criminals, require C.E.O.s to vouch for their companies' reports, and tighten the supervision of accountants. Lerach's case against Enron illustrates, for better or worse, the result of relying on private lawyers to do the public's business of policing corporate America.

At fifty-six years old, Lerach has a soft, fleshy look—"Scotch is my exercise," he explained—but what everyone notices is his hair, a mop of frizzy blond curls that resembles a full Afro when he neglects it, which is often. He grew up in Pittsburgh and started his law practice there, but after divorcing the woman he calls "my very, very first wife" he moved to San Diego. Lerach has been married and divorced three times and currently shares a large home near a country club with Michelle Ciccarelli, a thirty-four-year-old associate at his law firm, Milberg Weiss Bershad Hynes & Lerach. "I was blackballed by the country club," Lerach told me with pride. "I had sued two of the guys on the board of directors."



When times are tough for corporate America, business is good for Lerach and his firm.

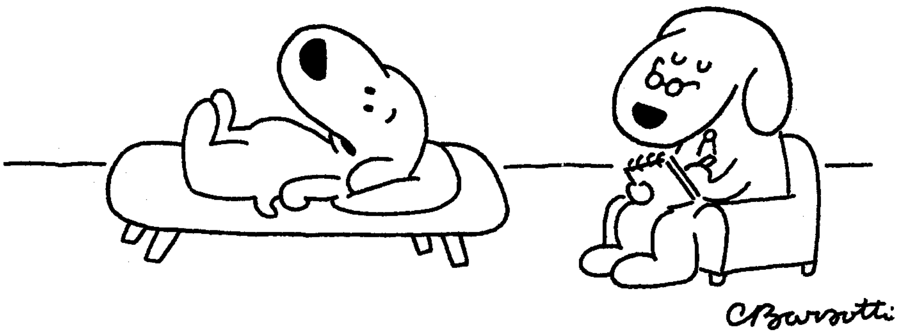
STEVE BRODNER

While he was in Pittsburgh, Lerach met a young New York lawyer, Melvyn I. Weiss, who was in the process of transforming securities law, which defines the rights of shareholders. In 1966, the Supreme Court, exercising its authority over the workings of federal courts, revised the rule on class actions, in part to make it easier to bring anti-discrimination cases. Although the new rule wasn't meant to apply to consumer cases or to tort cases, Martha Minow, a professor at Harvard Law School, said, "There were lawyers out there, people like Mel Weiss, who read the rule and saw how they could start bringing these mass cases for money damages. So they did."

Weiss recognized that the new rule could be used by shareholders as well as by civil-rights plaintiffs. Before 1966, if a company's executives committed securities fraud—if, say, they lied about their financial condition or engaged in insider trading—and the stock price plunged, shareholders had few options. "I said, 'This new rule is an opportunity for a young firm to make a mark,'" Weiss told me. "Instead of being generalists, we should really specialize in this area. Because of the new rule, we had an economic incentive to represent a whole body of smaller victims who couldn't afford individually to bring these actions. The whole concept of class actions and contingency fees was to give incentives to be an enforcer, a watchdog, which Congress understood couldn't be done by the government alone."

Weiss and Lerach built Milberg Weiss around a simple idea. The firm could prosper by filing class-action cases against companies whose stocks dipped. The corporations, rather than face the costs of litigation and the risk of defeat in the courtroom, often settled, even if they continued to deny any wrongdoing. Milberg Weiss dominates its field to a degree that no private firm does in any other kind of litigation. According to Woodruff-Sawyer, a San Francisco insurance company, Milberg Weiss initiates more than half of all shareholder class actions nationwide and eighty per cent in California, Lerach's base. (Milberg Weiss has two hundred lawyers, more than a hundred of them in San Diego.) A study by the *National Law Journal* in 1999 said that Milberg Weiss earned about six hundred and fifty million dollars in profits during the previous decade. Lerach and Weiss each made about ten million dollars a year.

In his pursuit of cases, Lerach once made a remark that he came to regret. "I have the greatest practice of law in the world," he said a decade ago. "No clients." At the time, Lerach's class-action cases were generally brought in the names of a stable of quasi-professional plaintiffs—a group of small shareholders who allowed the firm to use their names on complaints. One of Lerach's clients was a plaintiff in dozens of lawsuits. The lawyers, not the nominal clients, were running the cases, and in the nineties Lerach took a special interest in suing Silicon Valley companies, whose volatile



"If I didn't know before, I sure as hell know now who Manolo Blahnik is."

• •

stock prices made them prime targets for shareholder litigation.

Lerach was relentless. He sued Intel and 3Com five times, and many companies twice. Quoted in *Fortune,* John Doerr, the prominent venture capitalist, called Lerach a "cunning economic terrorist." But it was Lerach's personality, as much as his cases, that made him such a notorious figure. "He sits there in meetings ostentatiously reading the newspaper—just so everyone knows the contempt he feels for these executives," one lawyer who has faced Lerach said. Even though Lerach takes expensive fishing trips, he still looks as if he'd never been exposed to anything except fluorescent light. He wears thick glasses with clear frames, and the over-all white-on-white effect gives him the look of a malevolent ghost. "Bill made sure that the shareholder cases had an emotional aspect," another lawyer who is a frequent adversary of Lerach's told me. "He would meet with the executives and say things like 'I'm going to take away your house in Maui. I am going to take away everything you own. I don't care what else I do.' They came to hate Bill with an abiding passion."

In the mid-nineties, the business community decided to seek revenge and launched a major lobbying campaign for a law to limit shareholder litigation. Faced with the dubious honor of an act of Congress designed specifically to put him out of business, Lerach fought back. Over the years, he gave more than a million dollars to various Democratic candidates, and today he's on the board of Bill Clinton's Presidential library, in Little Rock. But in the nineties, when executives looked like heroes on Capitol Hill, Lerach couldn't count on most Democrats for support. In 1995, Lerach and others persuaded the President to veto the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act (P.S.L.R.A.), but Congress overrode the veto—for the first time in Clinton's Presidency.

Under the old law, Lerach could usually issue subpoenas and take depositions as soon as a lawsuit was filed—a time-consuming and expensive ordeal that many defendants chose to avoid by making quick settlements. Now plaintiffs first had to persuade a judge to reject a defendant's motion to dismiss the case; this meant that Lerach couldn't make corporate defendants spend much of their time, money, or reputations until months after he'd filed his lawsuit. The change forced Milberg Weiss to pay for independent investigations or hope that the press would do it instead. The P.S.L.R.A. also tried to remove one of Milberg Weiss's favorite targets—accountants, whom Lerach often charged with "aiding and abetting" the frauds of their clients. But Congress greatly restricted the accountants' potential liability for the misdeeds of their clients. That change was helped along by the accountants' lobbyist, Harvey L. Pitt, who is now the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

In class actions, the law firm that represents the lead plaintiff controls the litigation and earns most of the fees. The new law made it harder for Milberg Weiss's clients to win that coveted designation. Before the P.S.L.R.A., Lerach usually won lead-plaintiff status simply by recruiting a small shareholder to file the first lawsuit against the company. But the new law ended what was known as the race to the courthouse and sought, instead, to give control of shareholder cases to investors with the greatest monetary losses, generally institutional clients, like pension funds; Lerach had no base among those kinds of clients. According to one securities defense lawyer who lobbied for the P.S.L.R.A., "The whole idea behind the law was to destroy Lerach."

As if the new law weren't bad enough, Lerach found his aggressive style returning to haunt him in another way. Securities cases are often decided by battles among experts, who duel over such issues as whether a company's management behaved in line with normal business practices. Daniel R. Fischel, a professor at the University of Chicago law school, had testified against Milberg Weiss in shareholder cases, and the firm unsuccessfully sued Fischel's consulting company, Lexecon, for supposedly abetting a fraud scheme by a Lexecon client. As one witness testified, Lerach said the purpose of the suit against Fischel was to "put the little fucker out of business." Fischel and Lexecon, in turn, sued Milberg Weiss for abuse of process, and in 1999 a jury in Chicago awarded them forty-five million dollars in compensatory damages. The next day, when the jury was to begin weighing how much in punitive damages Lerach's firm would have to pay, Milberg Weiss settled the case for fifty million dollars—cash.

To this day, Lerach remains unrepentant about Lexecon. "Bad judge, unfair trial, an all-time dose of home cooking," he told me. "Paying fifty million dollars—it wasn't very pleasant, I'll tell you that." Pleasant, no, but feasible; the fact that the firm could pay such a settlement showed how successful it had become. Yet, given the new law and the size of the judgment, it wasn't surprising that some people thought Milberg Weiss was doomed. After the Lexecon debacle, *Fortune* published an exhaustive examination, by Peter Elkind, of Lerach's career, which amounted to a nine-thousand-word professional obituary. It was premature, and the Enron case shows why.

"We started looking at Enron when Jeff Skilling quit as C.E.O., in August of 2001," Lerach told me, as he outlined the way Milberg Weiss goes about its business. "Those guys never quit for 'family reasons.' We knew there

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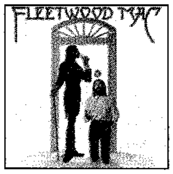

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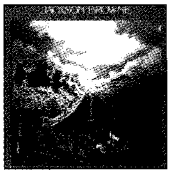

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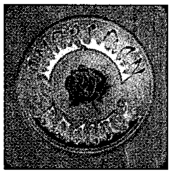

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had to be something rotten there." By last fall, as the company's stock began to sink, dozens of shareholder class actions were filed against it in Houston federal court, and Lerach's suit was among the first. "We began the case the way we always used to, filing a case on behalf of a small investor," Lerach said recently when we met in San Diego. "We do it not only to position ourselves. Once a case is filed, there's publicity, and witnesses come forward."

Lerach would eventually file a complaint that was nearly five hundred pages long and listed eighty defendants. They include Skilling; Kenneth Lay, the former chairman; Andrew Fastow, the former chief financial officer; two law firms that advised the company, Kirkland & Ellis and Vinson & Elkins; the accounting firm of Arthur Andersen, which was later convicted of obstruction of justice in connection with the Enron case; and nine investment banks that made deals with Enron, among them Citigroup and J. P. Morgan Chase.

"Everyone is small potatoes except the banks. They are the only way to get anything for the clients," Lerach said. "Poor Andersen"—Arthur Andersen—"gets pilloried for making fifty-two million in a year. These banks made fifty million on single deals. Anyway, there are no assets in professional-service firms. What am I going to get from Andersen at this point? The books in the library? The pictures on the wall? They're partnerships, and I'm not going to spend thirty years chasing some accountant in the suburbs of Chicago. The banks are the deep pockets."

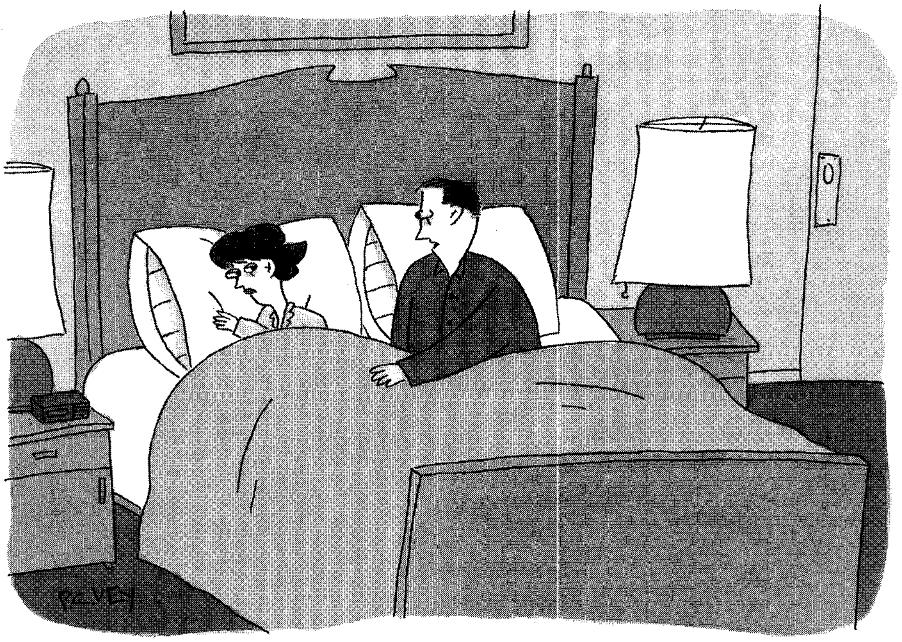
Before Lerach reached that point, however, he had to hunt for a major institutional client—one that would allow Milberg Weiss to be named lead plaintiff. The authors of the P.S.L.R.A. assumed that the major institutions would be reluctant to join Lerach's cases. That may have been true in the prosperous nineties, but these days, far from being offended by the brash tactics of Milberg Weiss and its ilk, the pension funds—hurt by declining stock prices and angered by the misbehavior of corporate executives—have become eager participants in shareholder litigation. Milberg Weiss even set up a database of the portfolios of some of its pension-fund clients, so that the firm can let them know when the time may be right to sue.

Searching for potential clients, Lerach hit upon Amalgamated Bank, which is owned by UNITE, the garment-industry union, and has been playing an increasingly aggressive role in policing the conduct of companies in its portfolio. "In October of last year, I got a call from one of Bill's guys, and he asked us if we had a position in Enron," Ron Luraschi, a senior vice-president of the bank, said. Amalgamated had lost about twenty million dollars in Enron stock, and the bank's leadership was pleased to join as a prospective lead plaintiff. During the fall, Lerach's competitors in the shareholder-litigation field were also trying to line up as many clients as possible—those with the largest losses in Enron stock—in order to be designated lead plaintiff. In the end, it was a three-way race: a coalition of state pension funds, including those of Georgia, Ohio, Washington, and Alabama, which had lost a total of about two hundred and five million dollars; the New York City pension fund, which had joined with Florida, for a combined loss of about four hundred and forty-three million dollars; and Milberg Weiss, with only Amalgamated and a handful of smaller Enron shareholders. Lerach's bid looked doomed. (Like other plaintiffs' firms, Milberg Weiss has contributed to the political campaigns of state officials who hire it to represent their pension funds; in New York, for example, the firm has given two hundred and twenty thousand dollars to the campaign of Carl McCall, the comptroller who is running for governor.)

Then, as Lerach recalled, "serendipity intervened." On December 6th, Lerach and a partner in the firm, Byron Georgiou, attended a forum on shareholder class-action suits for about thirty institutional investors at Stanford University. Georgiou, who was once the top legal adviser to the former California governor Jerry Brown, recalled that at the conference he and Lerach were approached by David Russ, the treasurer for the Regents of the University of California. "You know," Russ said, "I think we lost a lot of money in Enron. Why don't you come up and talk to our people about getting involved in your case?"

Milberg Weiss's lawyers made a series of presentations to the university's leadership, and learned that the pension fund had lost about a hundred and forty-five million dollars on Enron stock. No single comparable client had lost as much as the Regents. (The Florida pension fund lost more money, but it was an unlikely lead plaintiff because of possible misconduct by one of its investment managers.) "Milberg was really far and away the firm that was best positioned to litigate the case, because of its depth of experience," Christopher Patti, the university counsel, said. "It had a very aggressive posture toward the case."

Lerach also cut a deal on his fees. Mil-



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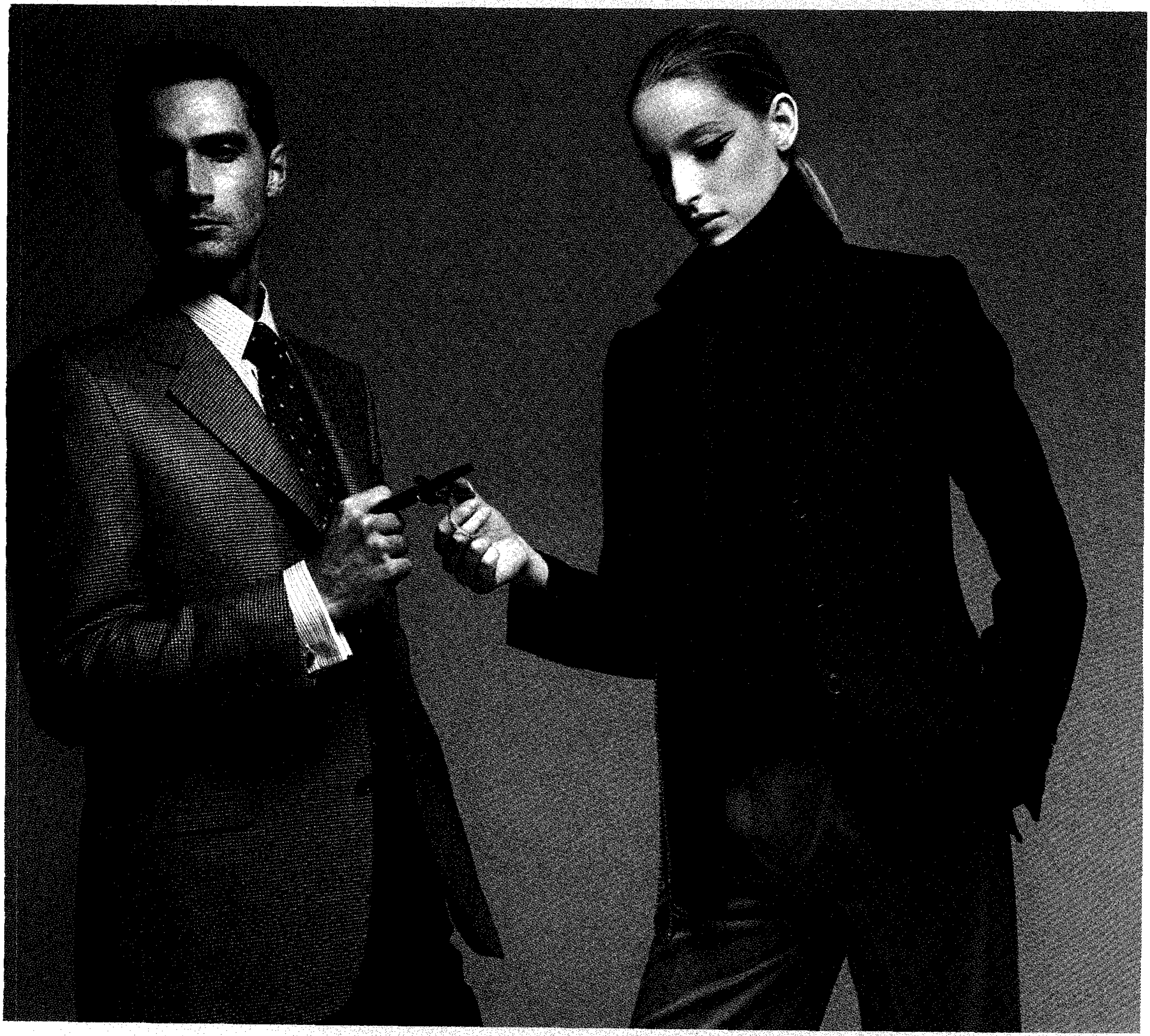

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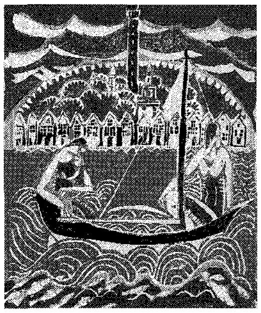

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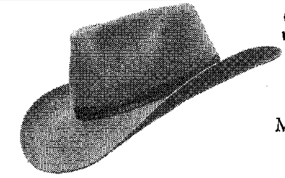

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berg Weiss charges on a contingency-fee basis, and in some cases it takes as much as a third of the damages. According to Lerach's arrangement with the Regents, which covers damages paid to all the plaintiffs, and not just to Milberg Weiss's clients, the law firm agreed to accept eight per cent of the first billion dollars in damages, nine per cent of the second billion, and ten per cent on anything more. So if the total award were three billion dollars, his fee would be two hundred and seventy million dollars. "We can get more than three billion in Enron," Lerach told me. (The largest shareholder case to date is a $3.2-billion settlement in 1999, involving Cendant, the parent company of Avis and Century 21 real estate; Milberg Weiss did not participate.)

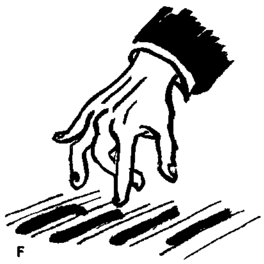
The Enron case was originally assigned to Judge Lee Rosenthal, who in other cases had granted lead-plaintiff status to the group of plaintiffs that suffered the largest collective losses in the stock. At the beginning of 2002, however, the case was transferred to Judge Melinda Harmon, who in earlier cases had viewed groups of plaintiffs with disfavor and had instead selected the single client with the greatest monetary loss. "Rosenthal had embraced small groups. Harmon went for the single-biggest-loser theory," Lerach told me. "We were sure she was going to follow her own precedent." But Milberg Weiss still also represented Amalgamated Bank and a handful of other clients in the Enron lawsuit. What to do about them?

"It was a little bit awkward because Amalgamated had been wonderful clients," Byron Georgiou said. "But at the end of the day they felt their interests would be better served by our becoming lead lawyers for the class." So Milberg Weiss essentially fired Amalgamated as its lead plaintiff—with the bank's permission. Amalgamated could remain in the case as a named plaintiff, but the Regents, with lead status, would be able to direct the course of the litigation. In reality—notwithstanding the intent of the P.S.L.R.A.—Milberg Weiss was in control of the litigation, and now Lerach had his chance to persuade Judge Harmon that he was the best lawyer for the job.

Even as Lerach was courting clients, he was organizing his own investigation of Enron, in order to win over Judge Harmon. In November, Lerach dispatched his partner Paul Howes, a former prosecutor, along with a team of investigators, to Houston to dig up evidence of fraud. "We started calling people and knocking on doors," Howes recalled. "And we set up a war room at the Four Seasons. As it turned out, another energy company had set up a job fair at the hotel, and it was just flooded with Enron people. I stood at the doorway and handed out a full package of my business cards. Every person gave us another person to talk to, and the thing just snowballed." One witness directed Howes to Maureen Castaneda, who had worked as an exchange-rate analyst for Enron.

Castaneda, preparing to move after Enron laid her off, had brought home boxes of shredded paper to use as packing material. "She told her husband that they were doing a lot of shredding at Enron in the final days, so maybe she should bring some of the paper home, to use it as filler when they packed up the family valuables," Howes recalled. "But then she realized that there was something more significant about the shredding—that it didn't take a rocket scientist to see that people at Enron were destroying evidence right up until the end." On January 18th, Castaneda met Howes in a parking lot and gave him a box of shredded Enron documents as evidence. Howes said, "I called Bill and told him about getting the documents, and he said, 'Paul, I really don't care what happens to you in the next forty-eight hours, but whatever you do don't lose those goddam documents.' " Four days later, Lerach and Howes unveiled their treasured paper fragments—their "smoking howitzer," in Lerach's triumphant phrase—to the cameras.

In a shareholder class action, it is critical to identify specific false statements made by company officials. To do this, Milberg Weiss commissioned



a proprietary piece of software that records conference calls made by executives at public companies for stock analysts. (These conference calls are broadcast over the Web, which is how the Milberg Weiss system secretly, but legally, records them.) "The system costs us hundreds of thousands of dollars, but it's proved to be worth it," said Patrick Daniels, a Milberg Weiss lawyer who worked on the Enron litigation from San Diego. For the Enron case, Lerach estimated that by this fall his firm will have invested three million dollars in out-of-pocket expenses and nearly five million dollars in lawyers' time—a commitment that few other firms could afford to make for a contingency-fee case. In that sense, the roadblocks established by the P.S.L.R.A. to thwart Lerach turned out to be like the golf courses that were lengthened to make them harder for the long-hitting Tiger Woods—they only reinforced Milberg Weiss's experience and resources.

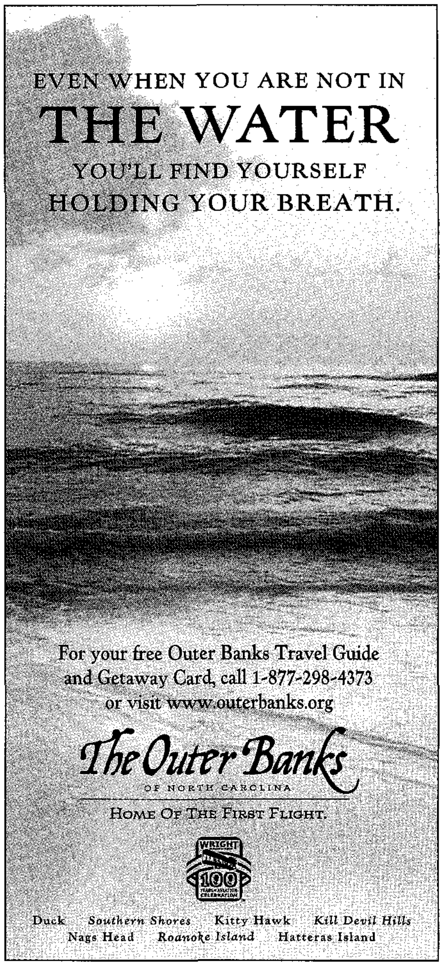
Still, Milberg Weiss wasn't the only firm plotting to win the lead-plaintiff designation. While Judge Harmon was weighing the question, someone leaked to the Los Angeles *Daily Journal,* a legal newspaper, that a federal grand jury in Los Angeles was investigating whether Milberg Weiss had paid certain shareholders to become plaintiffs. According to people who are familiar with the investigation, the allegations include possible false statements by Milberg Weiss in court filings; subornation of false deposition testimony by witnesses; and payments of cash to plaintiffs to disguise the source of funds. "We've coöperated in every way," Lerach told me. "We didn't do anything wrong; we will be just fine." (The lead prosecutor in the case, Michael Emmick, declined to comment.) The leak is widely believed to have originated with Milberg Weiss's rivals in the class-action bar.

Despite that potentially damaging news, on February 15th Judge Harmon named the Regents the lead plaintiff. In an eighty-four-page opinion, the Judge wrote that the "Regents presents itself as a single, organized coordinated organization represented by a competent and resourceful law firm." She went on, "The Court has found, that the submissions of [Milberg Weiss] stand out in the breadth and depth of its research and insight. Furthermore, Mr. Lerach has justifiably 'beat his own drum' in demonstrating the role his firm has played thus far in zealously prosecuting this litigation on Plaintiffs' behalf."

For Lerach, the news has gotten better. Last week, the international unit of Arthur Andersen, a relatively minor defendant in the Enron class action, tentatively agreed to pay forty million dollars to settle the case. And the continuing procession of corporate disasters only means more work for Milberg Weiss. The firm is leading the shareholder class action against Qwest—another ailing telecommunications provider—in Denver federal court, and although a federal judge in Mississippi threw out Milberg Weiss's earlier shareholder class action against WorldCom, Lerach is now capitalizing on that disaster as well. "We're doing something new with WorldCom," he told me. "We're going to sue the executives and bankers in state court as opposed to federal court. How about a West Virginia public-employees' pension plan against a bunch of New York bankers in West Virginia state court? That's a pretty good case, huh?" Lerach also has great hopes for the case against Martha Stewart. "Martha gets it next," he promised.

Lerach has built a mutually beneficial relationship with Congress in its investigations of executive misconduct. Because of the P.S.L.R.A., he couldn't issue subpoenas or take depositions in the Enron case before Judge Harmon ruled on the defendants' motions to dismiss (they are still pending), but he could take advantage of the work done by others. Milberg Weiss lawyers have been helping investigators on Capitol Hill, and Lerach himself has played a role behind the scenes. Lerach told me that he had information about Jack Grubman, the stock analyst for Salomon Smith Barney, who had long touted the value of WorldCom—a major client of his investment firm. Lerach said that during the late nineties Grubman had given executives at WorldCom special access to hot initial public offerings. "Investing in those stocks was like free money in those days, and I figured they would spread it around," Lerach said.

In early July, just before Grubman was scheduled to testify before the House Financial Services Committee,



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Lerach called Jonathan Cuneo, a Washington lawyer and lobbyist, and asked him to pass along the information about I.P.O.s to a congressman. Cuneo told, among others, a staffer for Representative Paul Kanjorski, a Pennsylvania Democrat, who on July 8th asked Grubman whether his firm had given this privilege to his clients at WorldCom. Grubman was visibly startled by the question, and his answers led to the disclosure that the executives had been rewarded. The revelation broke new ground in Congress's investigation of conflicts of interest; for Lerach, it was a productive new area to exploit for the benefit of his clients and his firm. Grubman himself resigned from Salomon Smith Barney.

What the public gains from Lerach's work is unclear. He's a poor substitute for the Securities and Exchange Commission lawyers who are charged with protecting investors. But Lerach has thrived at least in part because the S.E.C. has grown weaker; under President Reagan and the first President Bush, deregulation ruled at the S.E.C., and the Republican Congress did much to undermine Arthur Levitt, who ran the agency under Clinton. The second President Bush named Harvey Pitt, one of the accountants' lobbyists, to lead the agency. Though Pitt has changed his tone recently, he appears to have little use for any kind of enforcement activity—whether by the S.E.C. itself or through shareholder class actions. "I believe that the marketplace usually determines what rational people do," Pitt told me in June. "The reason plaintiffs' lawyers file lawsuits is that's what they do for a living."

Milberg Weiss is not the S.E.C. "The last thing that Bill Lerach wants is a bigger budget for the S.E.C. and more lawsuits to sue the people that he's suing," Joseph Grundfest, a professor at Stanford Law School, said. "If the S.E.C. had the resources to go after the problem in a big way, there is a great deal of evidence that suggests they would do a better job with the companies that have really committed fraud, and not pursue cases where the evidence is weaker. Bill Lerach gets paid for suing anybody where he thinks he can rationally expect a settlement that exceeds the cost of litigation. The lawyers at the S.E.C. don't find a little something extra in their paychecks based on the number of companies they sue." (The Sarbanes-Oxley bill does call for an increase in the budget of the S.E.C.) Most important, Lerach has no incentive to reform the companies he sues, much less to change the rules for all corporations. "What you always have to remember is that Bill is a businessman," Grundfest said.

Lerach may sometimes sound like a nineteen-thirties-style radical, invoking the language of class warfare, even in the setting of a private jet. "The P.S.L.R.A. was just propaganda for the corporate community, but we never stopped calling the rich and powerful to account for themselves," he said. "The venture capitalists and the high-tech boys viewed us as the only impediment to their greedy desires." As it happened, on our trip from Houston to San Diego Lerach directed the plane to take a detour to Lexington, Kentucky, so that we could drop off Michelle Ciccarelli, who had business meetings there. A quick hop between cities turned into a cross-country marathon of air travel.

Sitting in a leather seat at the back, his glass filled with Scotch and refilled along the way, Lerach talked for hours. Eventually, I asked if I could watch a DVD movie. "All we've got is 'Pearl Harbor' and a bunch of kids' movies," he told me. "I love 'Pearl Harbor'—seen it five times." There were some other choices, and Lerach said he would watch another one with me. But after about twenty minutes he took off his earphones and went back to studying a stack of papers. Lerach has a pre-Internet sensibility, and he was leafing through an unwieldy mix of photocopies, magazine tear sheets, and yellowing newspaper clips. He annotated furiously, scribbling check marks, stars, and exclamations like "WOW!!"

"Look at this," Lerach said, pointing to an article about the collapse of another energy-trading company, Dynegy. "One of our clients lost a hundred and ten million on them," he went on, trying unsuccessfully to contain his glee. "The whole industry was a fraud. You know, I'm coming out of my Enron funk. I've done nothing but Enron for the past eight weeks, and I have so many other cases. I just want to get back to work. So much fraud," he added. "So little time." ♦

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ANNALS OF STYLE

PERFORMANCE

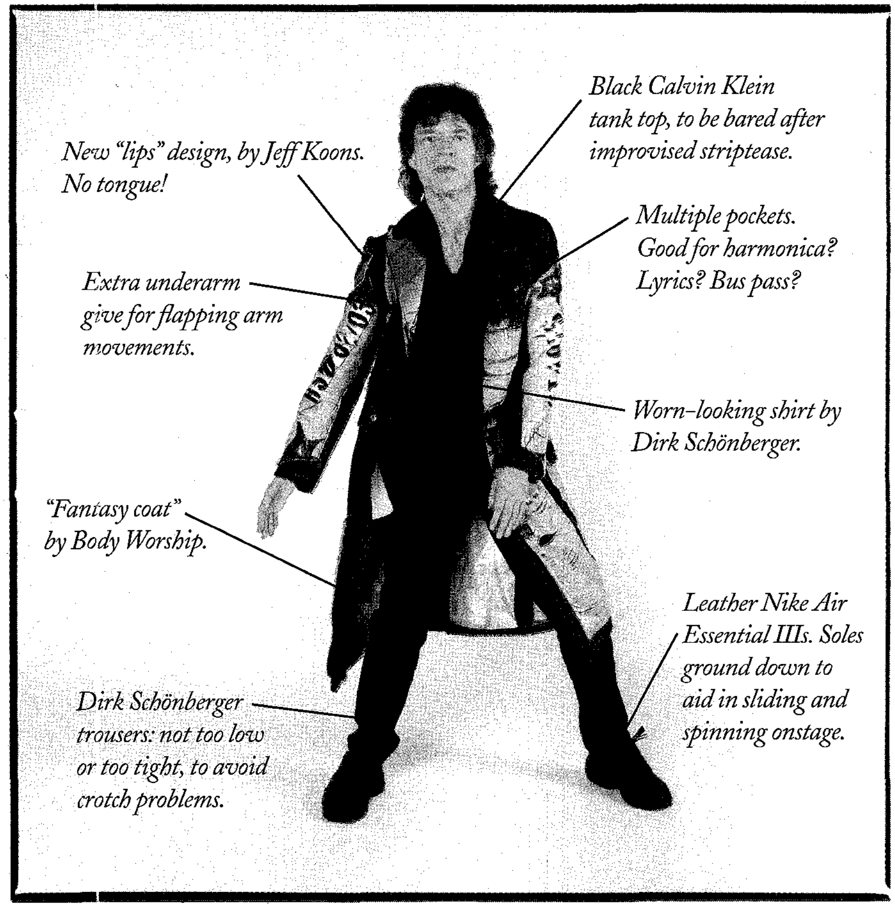
Mick Jagger on tour calls for a bit of color.

BY IAN PARKER

One afternoon last month, Mick Jagger was standing in front of a full-length mirror in a windowless room in downtown Toronto, plucking at the cloth of a pair of narrow black satin pants that had been made for him by Hedi Slimane, the designer at Christian Dior Homme, in Paris. "They're a bit, a bit—for want of a better word—*feminine*," Jagger said, in the over-enunciated, borderline-camp accent that honors distant roots in post-war British show business: a world of variety acts and Soho drag queens. Looking at the pants from one angle and then another, he said, "They're all right to wear for pictures and that. But I don't like the way they fall." They fell straight: Jagger in the flesh is surprisingly slight. One fashion stylist who worked with him says that he has "the hips of a Spanish waiter." "If you use thin material, it doesn't have a *flow*," Jagger said, his mouth making enormous movements. "It's too *flimsy*." Then, with faux impatience that did not quite disguise real impatience, he said, "O.K., what else?"

What does a fifty-nine-year-old lead singer with a twenty-nine-inch waist wear on a stadium stage? The Rolling Stones, preparing for a world tour that begins this week in Boston, have spent the summer rehearsing five evenings a week in Toronto's Masonic Temple, a shabby gray building on a busy intersection. The other day, a few orderly fans were standing outside in the sunshine. Inside, in the basement, Jagger was trying on a rack of stage outfits with no more fuss than marks a change of government in a small country. He had asked for his dressing room to be cleared of all but what he called "the minimum number of people—the *minimum*": I joined a publicist; a hair stylist; the film director Michael Apted, who was making a Rolling Stones documentary; Apted's cameraman and sound recordist; Jagger's fashion stylist, Maryam Malakpour; and Malakpour's assistant.

Malakpour, an Iranian-born woman in her early thirties, was wearing white jeans that had a small heart on the left knee, drawn with a pen. She worked on the last Stones tour, in 1999, and has also styled Jagger in his solo career. She forms a link between him and the fashion industry, although her client has his own fashion contacts and judgment, and uses the fashion term "piece" to describe an expensive item of clothing. For this tour, he wanted to commission pieces from Slimane, at Dior, whom he had met socially. He had also been struck by the handsomely weathered T-shirts made by Buddhist Punk, a London company. Malakpour had had the task of calling these designers, adding ideas of her own, seeing the European menswear shows, and then, in June, arranging a presentation and fitting session in Paris. At strict fifteen-minute intervals—in a fairy-tale scene that lacked only a small boy pointing an impudent finger—designers or their representatives laid out costumes for the approval of the newly entitled Sir Mick, and a London tailor who works with Alexander McQueen took his measurements. Jagger ordered a hundred or so items, most of them versions of next year's summer collections but made in stretchier fabrics or brighter colors or with extra crystals, to catch the light. (A rock star has roughly the same fashion priorities as a six-year-old girl.)



New "lips" design, by Jeff Koons. No tongue!

Black Calvin Klein tank top, to be bared after improvised striptease.

Multiple pockets. Good for harmonica? Lyrics? Bus pass?

Extra underarm give for flapping arm movements.

Worn-looking shirt by Dirk Schönberger.

"Fantasy coat" by Body Worship.

Leather Nike Air Essential IIIs. Soles ground down to aid in sliding and spinning onstage.

Dirk Schönberger trousers: not too low or too tight, to avoid crotch problems.

CHRISTOPHER WAHL

The clothes had begun to arrive in Toronto, where, during this second fitting, Jagger had the manner of an easy-going but hurried customer being shown real estate on his lunch hour. He was due any minute at rehearsal upstairs. To change, he stepped into an adjoining bathroom, and reappeared, saying, "Is the neck too scooped?" or "We are as red as red!" or "It's itchy, too itchy, very itchy, super-itchy." He tried on a sleeveless Buddhist Punk T-shirt that had a variation of what Rolling Stones people call the "classic tongue" logo, and two Dior shirts studded with crystals, the crystals spelling out "Mick" on one, and, on the other, forming a classic tongue against a black background. He tried on a pair of black leather Nike Air Essential III sneakers, explaining that he has the soles doctored for him. "All these sneakers are made to grip more than I really need," he said. He has to be able to spin. "We grind them down, polish the surface."

"In the end, it's all about the pants," Malakpour told me. According to Jagger, his perpetual problem with stage pants is that he expects them to have some give—allowing him to run around on stadium stages like a teen-ager—but he wants them to be properly cut trousers, not mere leggings. "You're in them a lot, more than anything else," he said. "They've got to keep their shape. And the trouble is, stretch fabrics start to bag. Round your bum or wherever, it all starts bagging, and you're endlessly pinning." He went into the bathroom and came back in a pair of loose, dark pants by the young German designer Dirk Schönberger. Turning from the mirror to Malakpour, Jagger said cautiously, "These are baggy enough to move about in. I might be able to wear them onstage. But they're a bit dull, aren't they? He could do other ones, in different colors apart from gray, he could do—"

"Exactly," she said. "Red."

"Blue. So it would be a bit more swishy."

"Yes, electric blue."

"Yeah, he could do an electric-blue silk tattered stripe, couldn't he?" Jagger asked. "I don't know, make it not so . . . subtle. I mean, this would be all right for maybe indoor shows, or a small theatre. But if you're doing a really big show, a bit of color."

Jagger has been dressing for the stage for forty years. The band's first manager, Andrew Oldham, was a "clothes fanatic," Jagger told me. "He loved clothes, and that's what managers did then—they dressed up the lads. One of his greatest pleasures was to take you to the tailor. We'd have our street clothes made and our stage clothes, and that was that." In the sixties, Jagger wore suits and thin ties (briefly), then mod shirts and corduroy jackets, then scarves and devilish frills, and the Uncle Sam hat and the black "omega" T-shirt at Altamont. ("I still have that. I don't know how that managed to survive," he said, adding that his daughters like to take things from his wardrobe.) Later, the eyes of the fans were directed with more force toward the Jagger crotch—in embroidered, unzipped Ossie Clark jumpsuits and in tight-laced knee breeches, during Jagger's sporty, gay-quarterback phase.

Throughout his career, some fundamentals of Jagger's look have remained constant: a hard male core—tightly covered Nureyev abs and crotch—that is teasingly revealed beneath a layer or two of something more feminine. There are similarities between Jagger's recent stage costumes and, say, his celebrated outfit for the Hyde Park concert in 1969: a white "dress," as the newspapers called it, over white pants. (Jagger described it to me as "a funny flouncy thing. It wasn't a dress. It was a sort of peasant blouse, gathered here." He was pointing to his upper thigh.) On this tour, as before, Jagger is likely to take the stage in a three-quarter-length coat, then do a gradual striptease during the first songs; later, he will leave and reappear in a more ornate coat, creating a moment of fashion drama. "It's for one number at the end, and the audience goes 'Ooooh,' " he said. Jagger and Malakpour call this all-important piece a "fantasy coat." One fantasy coat had been ordered from Dior; others were coming from the Italian label Costume National and from Body Worship, a New York company, and two from Alexander McQueen.

Sliding into a long Hedi Slimane coat made of red satin which had four lengths of fringe sewn horizontally into the lining (so that when he moves the fringes show), Jagger said, "Da da *da!*" and then bent his elbows and waved his arms up and down in a familiar flapping dance. It was a gesture of due diligence, not exuberance. Jagger's coats all have extra material under the arms to make this kind of movement easier. "A gusset," Jagger said, enjoying the word.

By now, he could hear Keith Rich-

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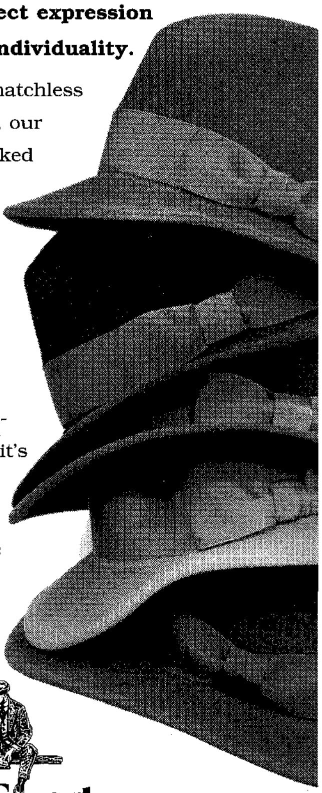

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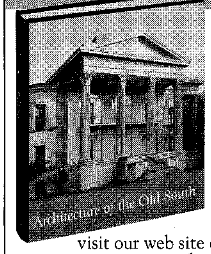

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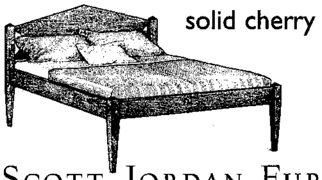

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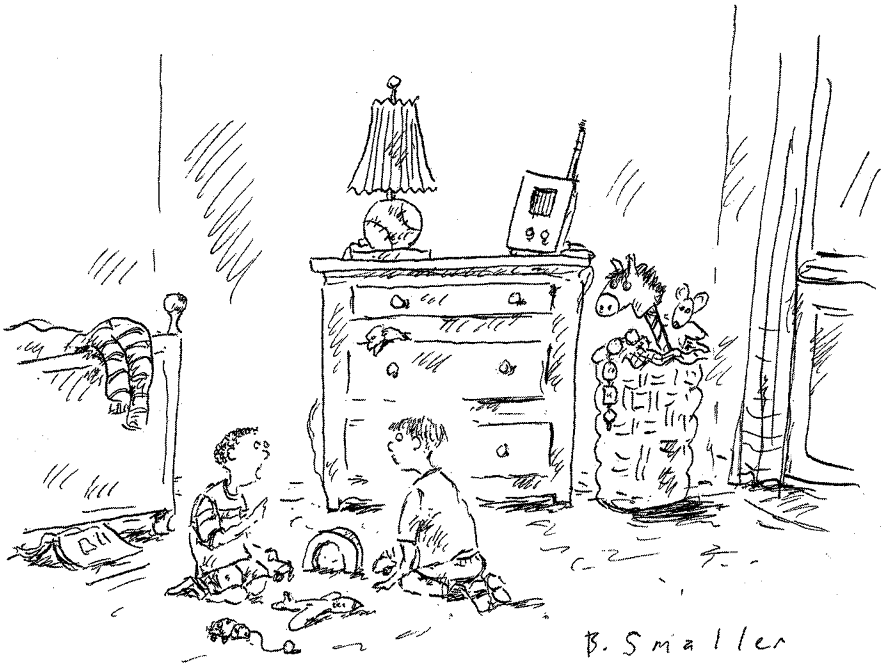


"Watch yourself—we're under surveillance."

• •

ards singing "Heart of Stone" upstairs. He went to join the rehearsal. A few minutes after he left, I passed Charlie Watts, the Rolling Stones drummer and a famously enthusiastic clotheshorse, in the corridor. I told him I was writing about Jagger's stage clothes. "That will keep you busy for half an hour, that will," he said, with feigned scorn.

Two weeks later, on the last day of rehearsals in Toronto, Jagger was again with Malakpour in his dressing room, now modelling his fantasy coat by Body Worship. Constructed from a dozen pairs of shredded jeans, scraps of leather, and silk printed with design motifs from previous tours, and featuring the new tour's logo—a Jeff Koons rendition of lips—the coat was a history of the Rolling Stones. "We could put Miss Venezuela across the back," Jagger said, with a fractional movement of his eyebrow, making apparent reference to the patchwork complexity of his personal life, and his former relationship with Vanessa Neumann, the Venezuelan known in the British press as the Cracker from Caracas. "Twelve pairs of jeans?" Jagger said, smiling. "Makes me sound fat.

"Only in the very early days of working in clubs did I not have something special to wear onstage," he said. "Part of the process of going onstage is to become a stage person. And even if I wore these trousers"—he had arrived at rehearsal in a T-shirt and Dirk Schönberger pants—"on the day that I put them on for the stage they're stage trousers. *Getting dressed.* Any actor will tell you the same."

The only time Jagger performs without first dressing the part is when he is drawn into the modern rock ritual of the impromptu guest duet. "My first worry is 'What am I wearing?' Say I go and see Lenny Kravitz or Sheryl Crow, there's always a great danger of them asking you. They may not. You never ask, 'Can I sing with you?' You wait until you're asked, and then if you're wearing the wrong thing you're in trouble." He laughed. "The clothes are important. Guitar players always think it's about what they play, you know. Lead singers have another attitude."

He looked in the mirror and said to Malakpour, "More crystals?"

"I would say, don't you think?"

"Yeah. A bit. Just a bit more sparkle." ♦

HOW'S THAT AGAIN? DEPT.
From the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

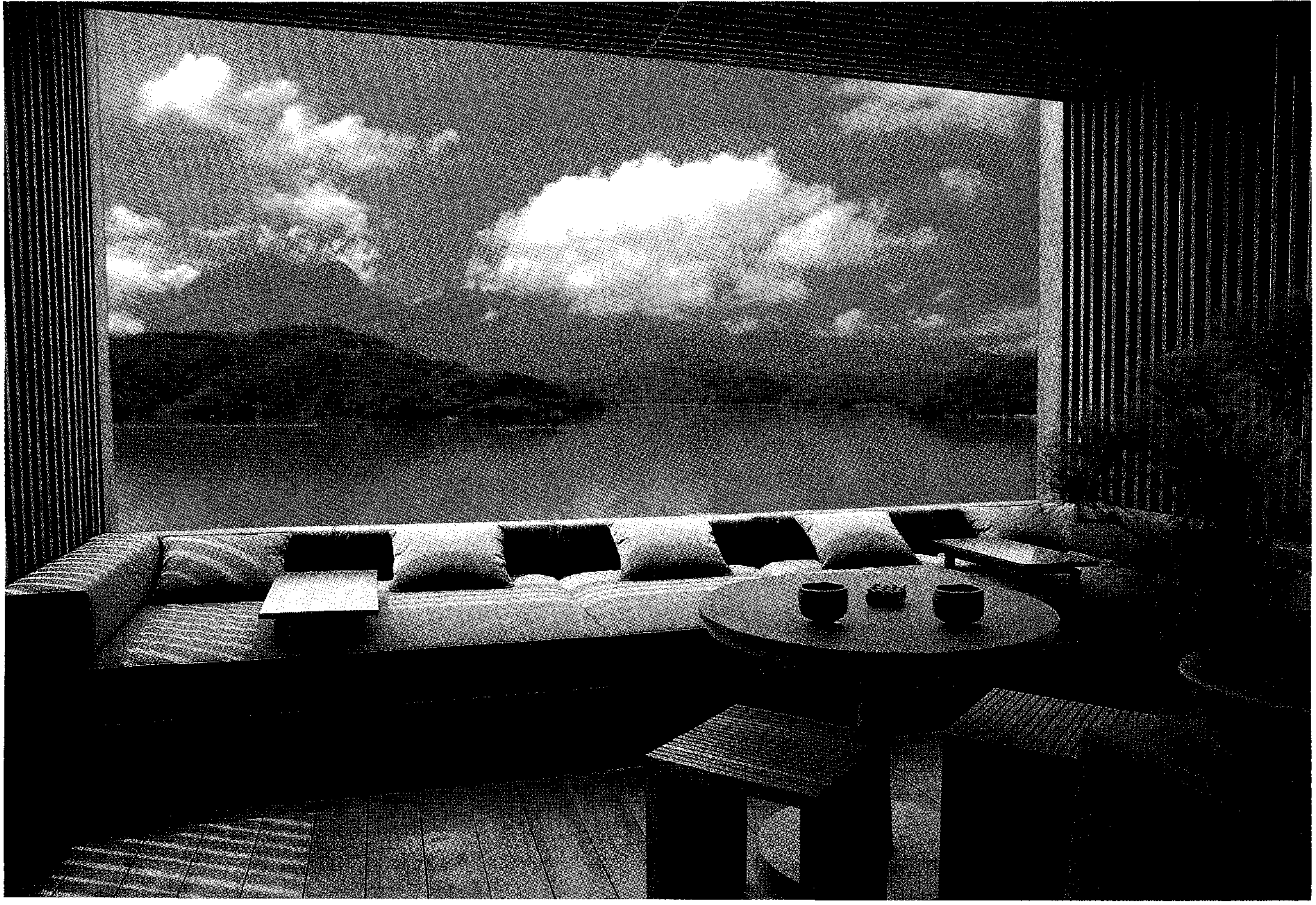
An explosion shattered windows and tore the front door off a Mormon.

"Let's say I'm off to the Sahara and wonder where I'm going to stay," muses world traveller, Herbert Ypma, whose passion is finding distinctive hotels with great personalities. "I want a place that sparks the imagination and that I can become a part of. I see Les Deux Tours, with its two Moorish towers and courtyards full of bougainvillea and jasmine, and I say, God, this is just like Paul Bowles' 'Sheltering Sky.' It's everything you long for in Marrakech—exotic, colorful, mysterious."

Author and photographer for HIP Hotels guidebooks (Thames & Hudson), Dutch-born Ypma roams the globe seeking out properties that are neither "hip" nor "hype," but rather "Highly Individual Places," from the Blancaneaux Lodge in Belize to Ngorongoro Crater Lodge in Tanzania. "Think of a hotel as a travel tool," says Ypma. "London's Hempel is so exquisitely pared down . . . . You don't have to go home and do your house that way, but you can make the most of great design and superb locations while you're there."

imaginative escapes

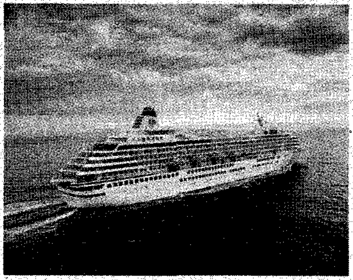
By Paul Burnham Finney



courtesy of Design Hotels Inc.

STYLISH SANCTUARY

The Lalu hotel in Taiwan overlooks the tranquil Sun Moon Lake and is ringed by jade-green mountains.



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INTANGIBLY INDIVIDUAL

"Design is almost a standard now," says Scott Crouch of Design Hotels, a German firm dedicated to marketing unique hotels. "It's the total effect—the smell, if you will, of the place—that counts," according to Crouch. "The idea is to blend hardware and software (the furnishings, the staff, the design) in just the right mix. It's not the image but the intangibles you can't touch that make up the experience."

Je ne sais quoi (that you-know-it-when-you-see-it panache) is what the finest innkeepers now strive to achieve. Travellers treasure it when they come upon it. It's the space, color, proportions, surprising embellishments, and bits of history that take the cliché out of traditionally boxy hotels. Skillfully put together, like an art installation of cunning parts, the whole creates a one-of-a-kind visual and psychological experience. In this environment a guest is no longer just a spectator but an actor in a drama with a cast full of guests.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Even the most "done-that" traveller would be impressed by Ypma's detective work. For instance, the interiors at Neemrana Fort Palace in Alwar, India, constitute a kind of breezy Hindu minimalism; whereas the spare Hotel Tresanton in Cornwall virtually gleams with mosaic tiled floors and painted tongue-in-groove paneling (no floral chintz anywhere). Ypma calls Tresanton "the most stylish little English hotel outside London."

What, in fact, should a hotel look like? "When people go to Bali, they want a South Seas feeling," says architect and hotel designer Charles Bickford, and yet, "you wouldn't do a shoji house in Provence. The best escapes amplify the local attractions," says Ypma, citing the rugged beauty of Dolores, Colorado that harbors Dunton Hot Springs in the Rockies; the stunning expanse of Sweden's Arctic crowned by the Icehotel; the cowboy charm of Camargue, south of Arles, France, that sports Le Mas de Peint; and El Questro, set amidst the million acres of far Western Australia with its stunning gorges, baobab trees, waterfalls, and estuaries.

Inside Information

HER CONNOISSEUR-SHIPS

The remoteness of many of today's desirable hotels is enough to make you rush for a *National Geographic* or Michelin map. Have you been to the Amanwana on Indonesia's Moyo Island, for example, the island outpost snuggling up to Bali?

Your most commodious passage to out-of-the-way destinations may well be via a cruise line such as **Crystal Cruises**. Currently operating two 940-guest ships, the Harmony and the Symphony, a third even larger ship, the Serenity, is due next July. With a 2003 cruise schedule that includes more than a hundred destinations to all seven continents, your itinerary can be a study in "Jeopardy" geography.

It's no stretch to add the serenity and privacy of the idyllic U.S. Virgin Islands to the list. On St. John, a recipient of eco-tourism awards with three-quarters of the island off limits to developers, the 170-acre Caneel Bay, founded by environmentalist Laurance Rockefeller, marries a blue-chip resort to its tropical surroundings so skillfully that it seems built into the landscape. In its loyalty to low-key vacationing, Caneel Bay has never surrendered to the high-tech trappings of our digital age. TV sets in guest rooms are taboo and wake-up calls are replaced by a gentle knock on the door.

When form follows function, as architect Louis Sullivan notably advised, design can take a turn for the poetic, as seen in The Cayman Islands, known for its world-class dive sites—more than 220 in all—from Eden Rock to Bloody Bay Wall. Diving, in fact, is the design theme for many of the resorts on all three islands. The recently opened Cobalt Coast, built in the style of a Caribbean Great House on Grand Cayman's Boatswains Bay, is about as close to the briny as a beach hotel can get, and has its own 120-foot deck and an on-site dive center, making shore diving accessible just outside your front door.

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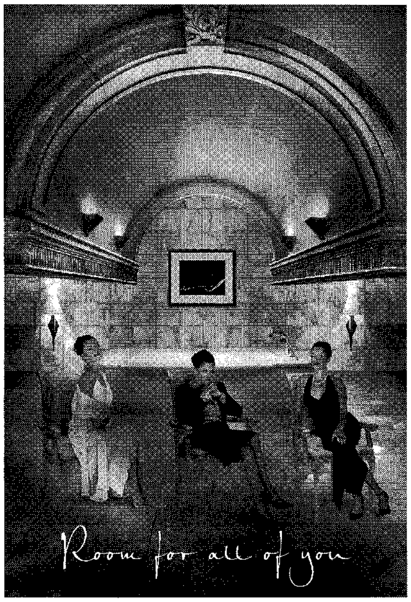
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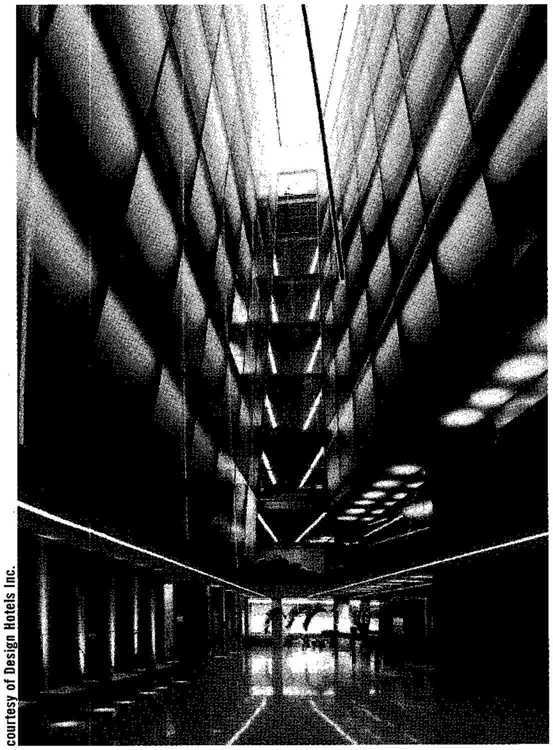
DEFINING JUDGMENTS

In the new era of hotel connoisseurship, it's all about relativism and subjectivism, making judgments amazingly ecumenical—the common denominator being whatever your eyes like to feast on. Just call it good design. "The hotels we like are sometimes large, sometimes small," says Design Hotels' Crouch. "London's Great Eastern Hotel, designed for portmanteaus and ball gowns, is a distant cousin to Villa Fontelunga, a small hotel in Tuscany that resembles a private home. Going there is like joining a house party, and you come and go as you please. There are dogs running around, and designer Paolo Kastelec's Tuscan mother enjoys cooking for guests."

"I shop around all the time," says Ypma, who doesn't hesitate to gather tips on good prospects from his circle of well-travelled, design-conscious friends. "When you go to Paris, you might want to try the Hôtel Costes. Staying there, you feel as though you're in an Agatha Christie novel. In the depths of winter, I head for the Hôtel Trocadéro Dokhan's because it's very cozy, and there's a beautifully paneled breakfast room that feels just right. But in the summer, I'll stay at the Lancaster. The rooms at the top have lots of light and balconies where you can look out over Parisian rooftops."


courtesy of Design Hotels Inc.

LUMINESCENTLY RISING

The Side's eight-story atrium provides Hamburg with high drama that carries through to a subterranean pool and floor-to-ceiling windows.

The hotelistas who sort out the great from the good and discover those unknown divas also tout some highly acclaimed urban stars. For instance, Ypma praises the Hong Kong Peninsula as having "all the bells and whistles" and gives his blessing to London's One Aldwych, noting that the pool's underwater sound system allows guests to swim to the strains of Mozart.

Hardly forgotten in the current pursuit of praiseworthy hotel design is the innkeeper's traditional role of feeding travellers, often elaborately. Having fine dining on the premises is virtually a requirement for membership in the prestigious Relais & Châteaux global group of hotels and restaurants. This month, the luxe Peninsula New York is opening Fives, a stylish restaurant and bar named after the hotel's Fifth Avenue and 55th Street location. Chef Oliver Dudler's "Atlantic Rim" menu will feature game and fish simply prepared from fresh market ingredients. Diners will enjoy an occasional twist on his authentic flavors such as braised rabbit loin dusted with cocoa, as well as the restaurant's playful setting.

DUCE'S DELUXE DIGS

The Villa Feltrinelli, a neogothic folly on one of the finest slices of real estate on Italy's Lake Guarda, is one of the most distinctive hotels anywhere, according to Ypma. In the nineteenth century, the Feltrinelli family built the villa as a

St Croix - ***St John*** - *St Thomas*

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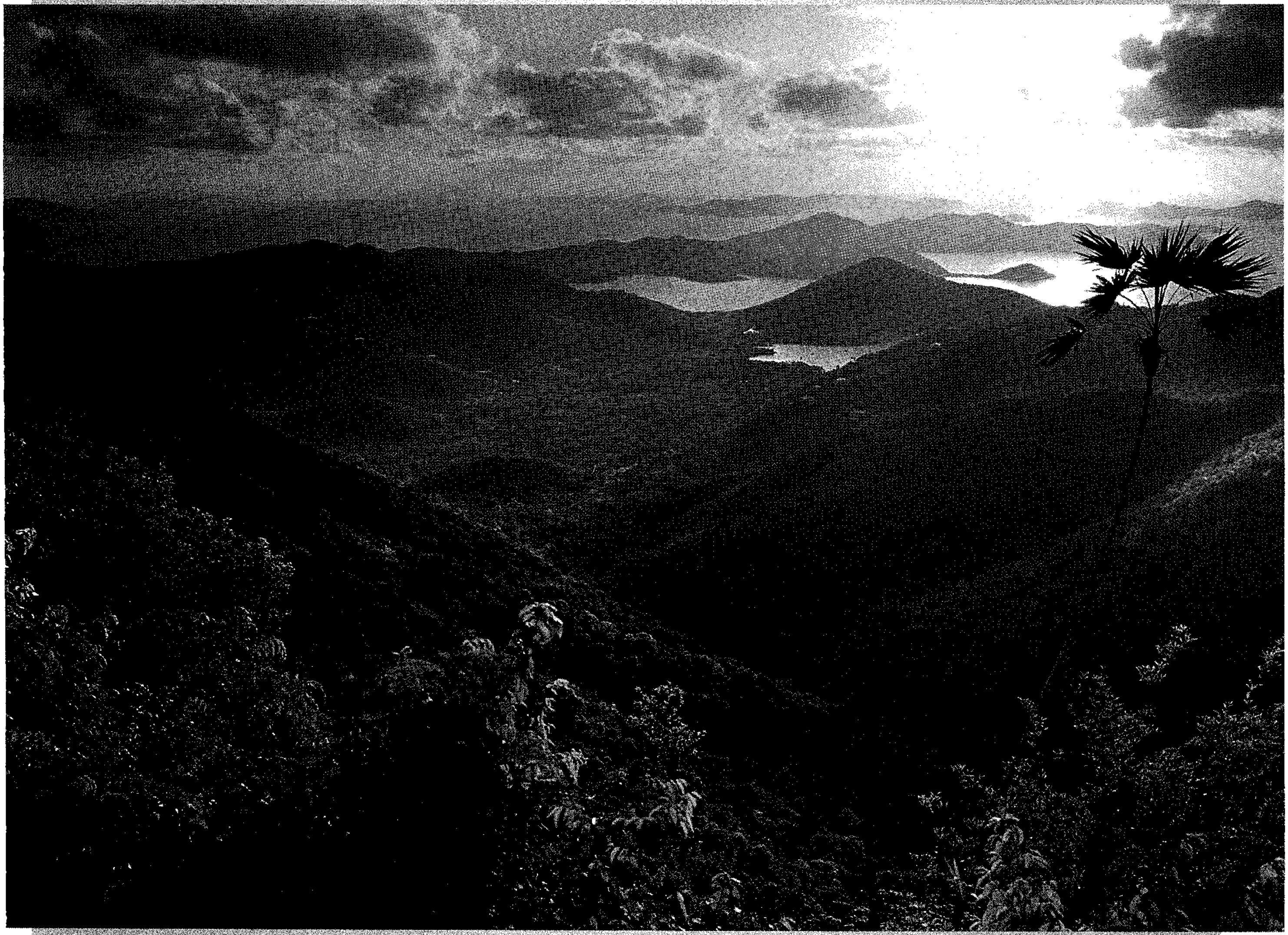

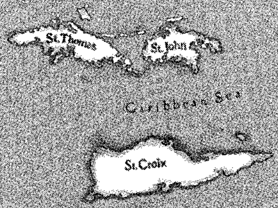

3 Islands - Endless Possibilities Few things in this world are as exhilarating as a view of the Caribbean at sunrise. Yet somehow, the very sight that stirs your soul also possesses an amazing ability to calm it. For more information about St. Croix, St. Thomas or St. John, call your travel agent, 800-372-USVI or visit us online at www.usvitourism.vi.

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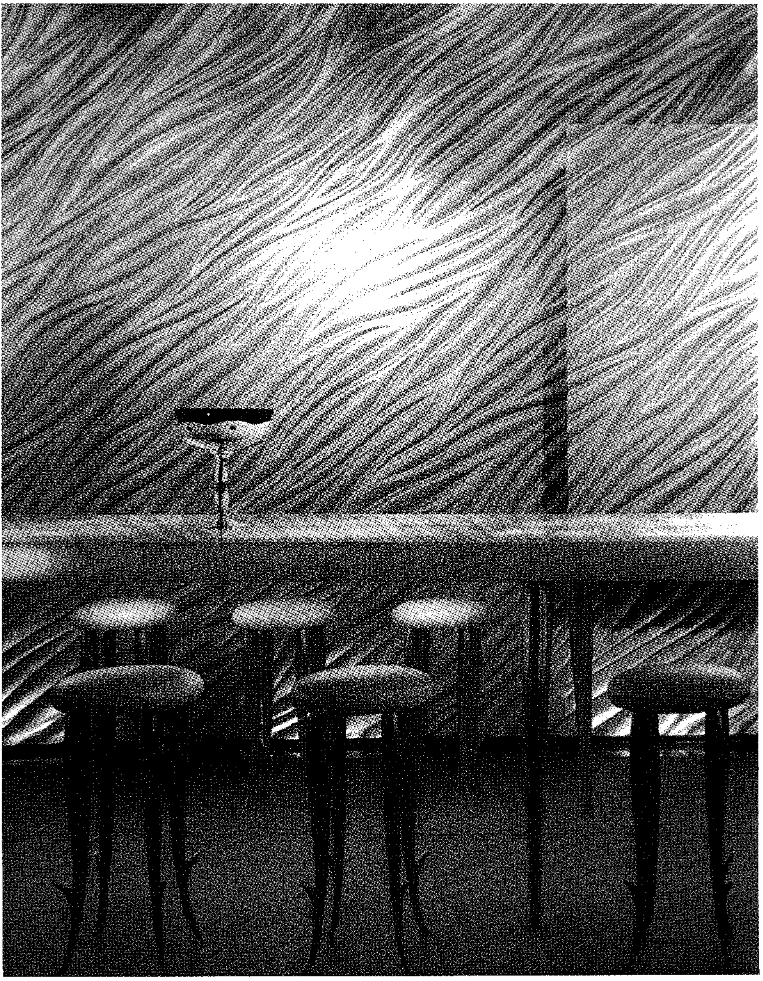
Contact the United States Virgin Islands Department of Tourism for more info: Atlanta, Chicago, D.C., LA, Miami, NY, and Toronto. ©2002 United States Virgin Islands Department of Tourism summer home to escape the pace of Milan. Decades later, at the end of World War II, the Italian Resistance captured Mussolini and the fantasy castle briefly became where the Fascist dictator lived under house arrest. After the war, the family lost interest in the property and it slowly fell into disrepair. In 1997, the villa ended up in the hands of legendary hotelier Bob Burns who executed its massive renovation. "He's made something colorful, fun, and funky out of a rather somber interior, without sacrificing any of its grandeur," says Ypma. "The rooms are each the size of a New York luxury apartment. Each of the twelve guest rooms is more magnificent than the next. Everyone who stays at the Villa Feltrinelli walks around with an aristocratic glow. Each feels he has his own villa. It's perfect in almost every detail."

(Paul Burnham Finney is a New York-based freelance writer.)

Inside Information

IF WALLS COULD TALK

With a historical legacy all its own, New York's Waldorf-Astoria is a veritable gallery of art deco that shares its architectural heritage with the adjoining **Waldorf Towers**. Its 35th floor, four-bedroom Presidential Suite, decorated in Georgian style, contains the personal desk of former resident General Douglas MacArthur, Herbert Hoover sconces, and a rocking chair once used by JFK. The tour de force in the Royal Suite, a favorite of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, is the thirty-nine-foot living room furnished with pieces from the French Regency period, carpeted with a $25,000 Persian rug, and equipped to accommodate fifty-five guests at sit-down dinners.



courtesy of Herbert Ypma/Thames & Hudson

HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDE

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NEWS BRIEFS

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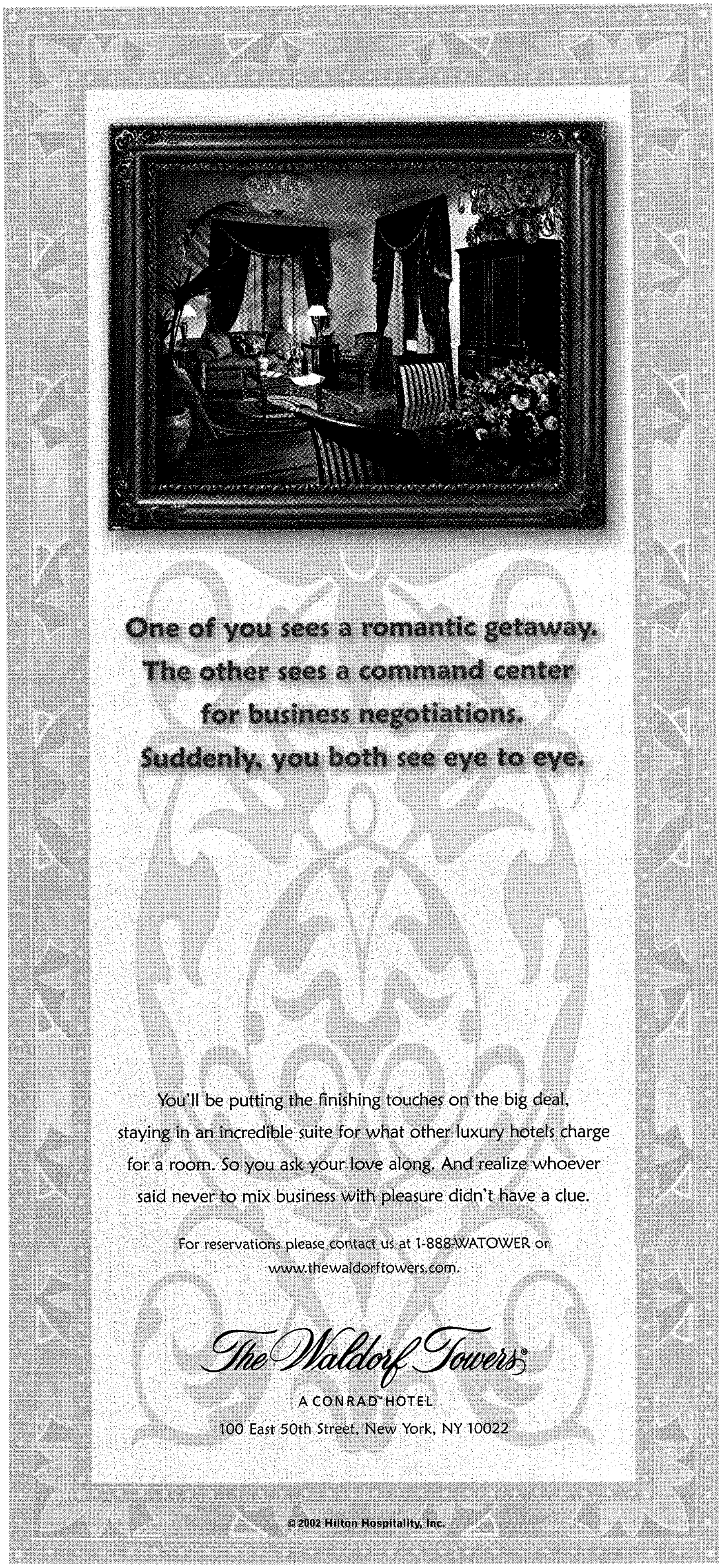
–Dan Ouellette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LETTER FROM ROTTERDAM

BEYOND TOLERANCE

What did the Dutch see in Pim Fortuyn?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

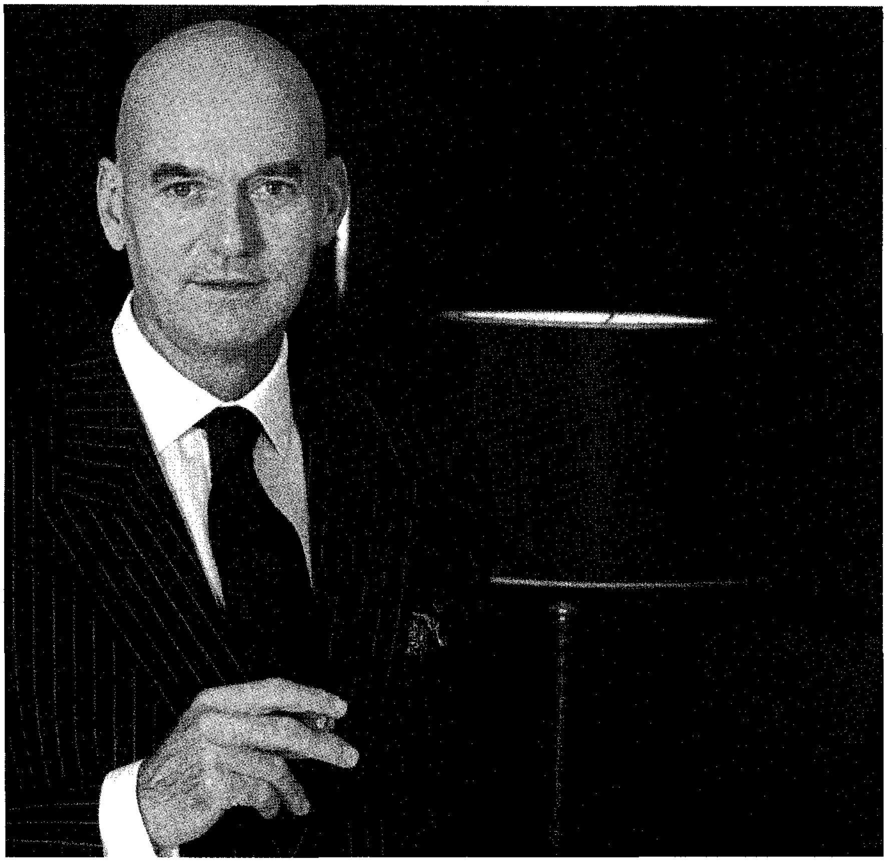
On July 19th, ten weeks after he had been buried in the little town of Driehuis, just outside Amsterdam, Pim Fortuyn was dug up again. The disinterment was scheduled for 7 P.M., and, exactly on time, a machine resembling a giant spider appeared. It started clawing at the ground, gradually producing a large mound of sand. The whole process—the unearthing of the casket, the singing of "Amazing Grace" in Dutch, the slow departure of the white hearse covered in sunflowers—a sort of funeral in reverse, took an hour and a half, and was broadcast live on national TV. Frequently, the coverage was intercut with file footage of Fortuyn's grieving followers, some of whom had had his slogan, "At your service," tattooed—in English—on their shoulders.

Politicians are, in their range, a little like poets; there are some who survive translation, and some who don't. Certainly, in an American idiom much of what Fortuyn had to say sounded racist. He claimed that he wanted to close Holland's borders—the country, he liked to say, was "full"—and declared Islam a "backward" religion. "Moroccan boys never steal from Moroccans," he asserted early this year in a newspaper interview. "Have you noticed that?" As a consequence of statements like these, he was often lumped together with such reactionary xenophobes as Jean-Marie Le Pen, Jörg Haider, and Belgium's Filip Dewinter, his success interpreted as further evidence of Europe's rightward swing.

Yet, at the same time, Fortuyn maintained that he was revolted by bigotry, and his own career definitely would have tested American notions of tolerance. A frank devotee of gay bars, Fortuyn once observed that he preferred a "darkroom," the space provided by some Dutch night spots for casual sex, to the inside of a church. Most of Holland knew that he was in love, unrequitedly, with a commercial photographer, that he had a butler called Herman, and that he was driven around the country in an enormous Jaguar with his two little dogs, one of whom had been named after Herman's ex-boyfriend. ("Put on your colleagues," Fortuyn used to say to Herman when he wanted to hear the Slave Chorus from "Aida.") Often accused of racism, Fortuyn (pronounced "fore-town") retorted, "I don't hate Arab men—I even sleep with them." At the time of his murder, the week before the Dutch parliamentary elections, in May, he was the leading candidate to become the new Prime Minister.

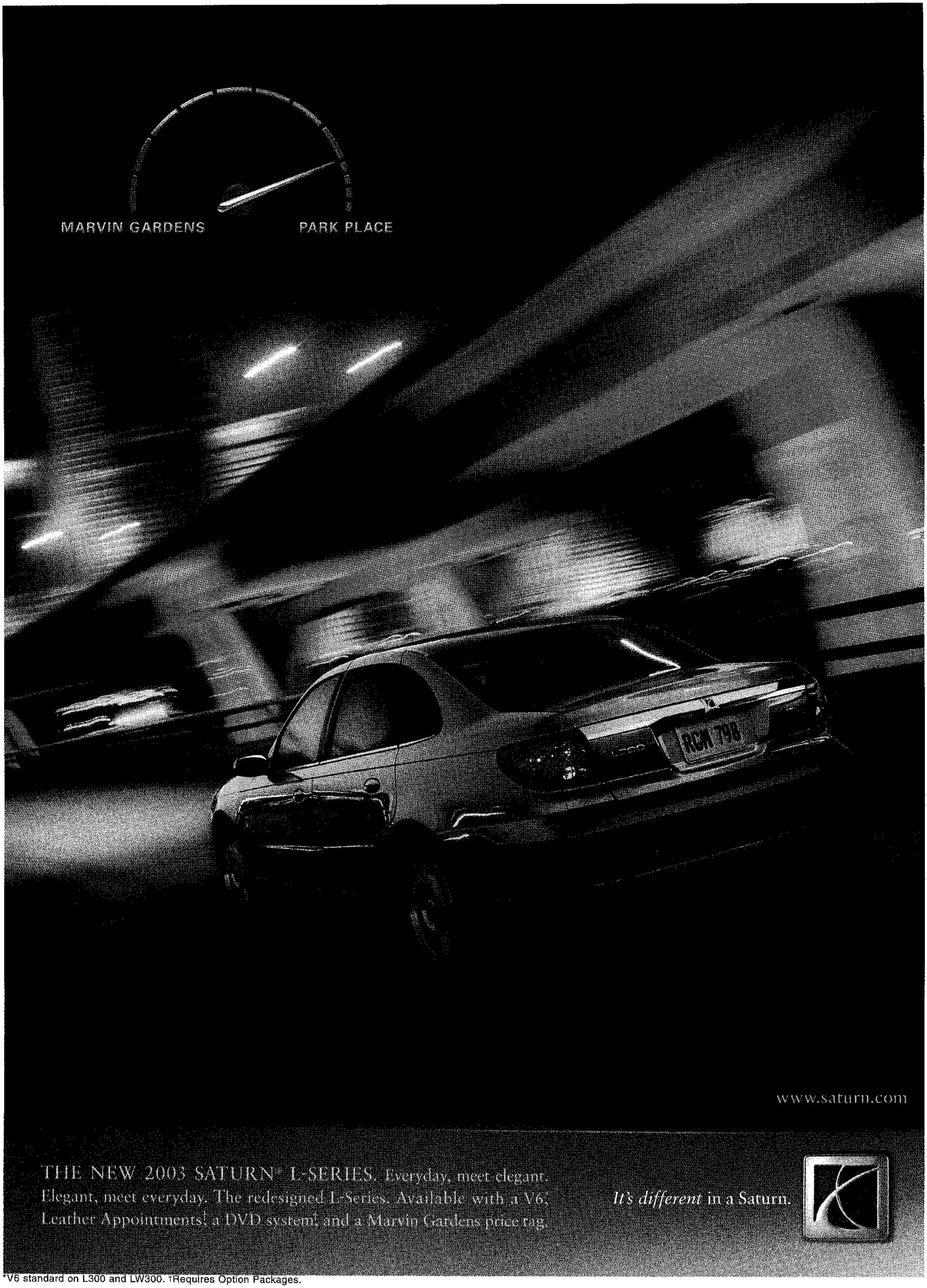
Fortuyn spent two and a half months in the ground in Driehuis, and during that time it was estimated that a hundred and fifty thousand mourners visited his grave. After his casket had been removed, cemetery workers lowered box upon box of farewell notes into the empty pit, a process that was also broadcast live. No one I spoke to in Holland seemed to find the televised exhumation in any way odd; nor did anyone comment on the fact that Fortuyn, for all his Dutch nationalism, was being dug up so that he could be reburied near his summer house in northern Italy. When I arrived in the Netherlands, I assumed that his supporters didn't see, or didn't care to see, the inconsistencies; gradually, however, I came to believe the reverse.

I finally caught up with Fortuyn, as it were, the day after his exhumation, in his home town of Rotterdam. His corpse had spent the night at the airport, and by the time I got there, at 8 A.M., a crowd had assembled on the tarmac. Two striped tents had been set up to dispense refreshments, and a group of teen-agers were handing out buttons printed with another Fortuyn slogan: "*Ik zeg wat ik denk en ik doe wat ik zeg!*" ("I say what I think and I do what I say!") All morning long, mourners kept arriving—by car, by bus, and, this being the Netherlands, by bicycle. Eventually, Fortuyn's casket was wheeled out from a hangar and onto a chartered plane. A pair of



Fortuyn's flamboyant gayness helped make his reactionary xenophobia publicly palatable.

PAUL DYKSTRA



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fire trucks sprayed water high into the air, creating a rainbow. Everyone clapped, and several people standing near me began to weep. An elderly woman carrying an enormous camera declared, "He was our one hope for the future, and Holland is now lost."

Rotterdam lies at the mouth of the Rhine and the Maas Rivers, in a tangle of waterways so complex that even many who live in the city cannot say exactly which is which. It is first and foremost a port—the largest in the world—but, because the city's harbors are too shallow to accommodate modern cargo ships, nowadays much of the real work takes place twenty-five miles to the west, on the North Sea coast. Central Rotterdam was bombed twice during the Second World War, once by each side, and rebuilt, in postwar style, with broad glass office buildings and open pedestrian plazas. Like Amsterdam, it lies below sea level and is filled with canals. Unlike Amsterdam, it has very little charm.

Fortuyn lived on a prosperous, almost suburban-looking square not far from the center of the city, in what he called the "Palazzo di Pietro." From the name, I had expected something grand and Italianate, but the house turned out to be brick and gabled and quintessentially Dutch. In front was a large pole flying a flag with a coat of arms that, I was later told, was purely fantastical. Since Fortuyn's assassination, the house has become a shrine, where visitors leave offerings of flowers and balloons and stuffed animals. While I stood by the gate, several people pulled up, including a woman on a bicycle who was carrying a candle. "I come here very often," she told me after she had finished lighting it. "Fortuyn said what we thought, what we would like to say, but most of the time we were afraid to. Just like they did with him, they call you a racist."

Fortuyn was born in 1948 in Velsen, northwest of Amsterdam, and christened Wilhelmus Petrus Simon—Pim for short. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic but apparently always had trouble with the strictures of the Church; reportedly, one of his earliest sexual encounters was with an altar boy. In the mid-sixties, Fortuyn went off to the University of Amsterdam to study sociology, and became a Marxist. His first job was at the University of Groningen, where, for sixteen years, he read Mao and taught courses on revolutionary theory. In 1988, he lost his teaching job in a round of government budget cuts and moved to Rotterdam. There he seems to have exchanged dialectical materialism for materialism straight up. He opened a political-consulting business, drifted to the right, and became a columnist for the Dutch weekly *Elsevier*. Eventually, he worked his way onto the pundit circuit, and, much in demand as a corporate speaker, grew wealthy, though not necessarily as wealthy as the two houses, the butler, and the Jaguar demanded.

The notion of becoming a politician seems to have occurred to Fortuyn only about a year and a half ago. To his friends as much as to anyone else, the idea sounded improbable. In the Netherlands, even members of Parliament are expected not to put themselves forward, or tout their own leadership abilities, but to work their way quietly—and coöperatively—up the party ranks. Fortuyn, however, was not planning a traditional Dutch campaign, as soon became clear.

In August, 2001, he joined a new party, called Leefbaar Nederland, or Livable Netherlands, which, coincidentally, was looking for a leader. For six months, he used the Party to increase his visibility; then he managed to get himself kicked out of it. In an interview with Hans Wansink, a columnist for *De Volkskrant*, Fortuyn declared, on the topic of immigration, "As far as I am concerned, no Muslim will ever come in." This was precisely the sort of comment he had promised not to make upon taking over the Party—reminded of his broken pledge, Fortuyn replied, "That shouldn't bother me!"—and, naturally, it got a lot of press. Wansink described Fortuyn as a brilliant media manipulator. "He was a genius performer, a pop-star kind of populist," he told me.

Within days of his departure from Leefbaar Nederland, Fortuyn announced the creation of another new party, which, in ever more extravagant fashion, he named after himself. The Lijst Pim Fortuyn's parliamentary slate included an ex-beauty queen, an optometrist, a chauffeur, some students, and a businessman who dealt in pornographic Web sites. From the outset, Fortuyn predicted that he would be the next Prime Minister, a claim that was dismissed as just another piece of theatrics until Rotterdam held its municipal elections, in March. A slate of local candidates headed by Fortuyn ran on an anti-crime, anti-immigrant platform. It came in first, defeating the Labor Party, which had run the city almost without interruption for eighty years.

One gray day while I was in Rotterdam, I took a walk around the city with Han van der Horst, a social historian and the author of a book about the Dutch called "The Low Sky." (The title came from the father of van der Horst's ex-wife, a Brazilian, who warned his daughter not to stay in the Netherlands because the sky there was too close.) A tall man with very black eyebrows and little James Joyce glasses, van der Horst met me at my hotel on a Saturday afternoon wearing a coat and tie. No fan of Fortuyn's, he spent much of our afternoon together trying to come up with the proper English term for him, finally hitting on "charlatan." Before we set out, van der Horst drank three cups of espresso and smoked more cigarettes than I could keep track of. When he ran out, he couldn't find a pack of the brand he favors, so he bought a different kind and proceeded to snap off all the filters.

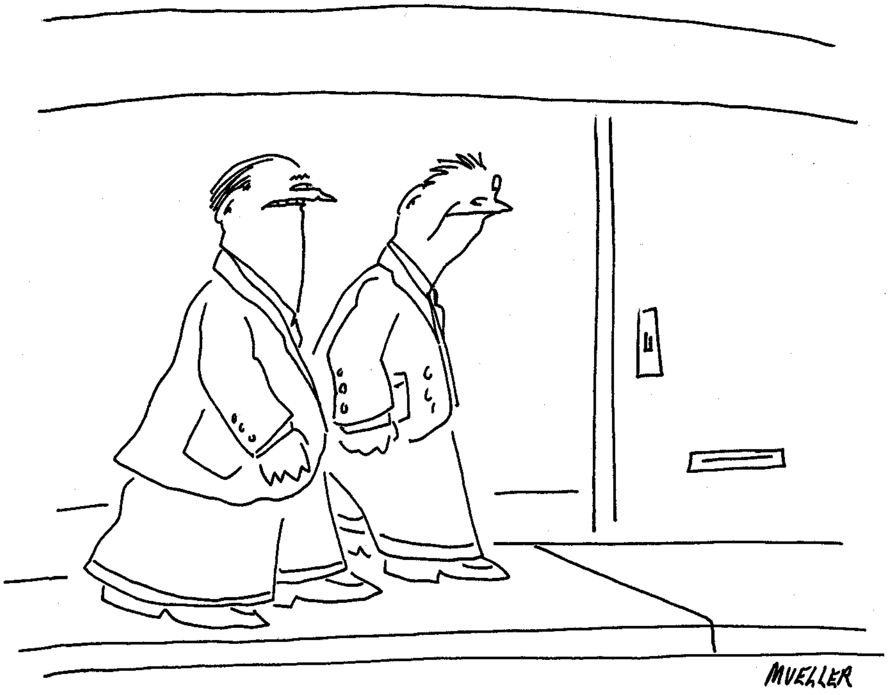
We began not far from the city center, in an area known as Oude Westen. The neighborhood, filled with low brick apartment houses, was, thirty years ago, typically Dutch, which is to say all but entirely white. Now it is crowded with ethnic groceries, Surinamese take-out places, and Arab music shops. As we walked toward the river that divides the city, the Nieuwe Maas, we passed a large brick church that had been converted into a mosque, groups of Turkish men playing cards, and, among the neighborhood stores, several "coffee shops" of the sort that do not sell coffee. (On a subsequent walk through the city, I stopped in at one of these shops, where, for two dollars and fifty cents, I was offered a joint the size of a cigar.) Later, we cut across an outdoor market patronized mostly by veiled women. I asked several of them about Fortuyn, but none of them held, or were willing to express, strong opinions. A young Moroccan who had come to Holland five years ago told me that she was saddened by the murder. "If it comes from Allah, it's acceptable," she said. "From man, it's not." In Delfshaven, the oldest part of the city, we visited the church where the Pilgrims had boarded the Speedwell, which they later traded for the Mayflower. Inside the church, we discovered an Ethiopian wedding in progress. Van der Horst paused outside to smoke several cigarettes.

Roughly a third of all Rotterdammers today are immigrants, and among the school-age population that figure comes close to two-thirds. Some are children of "guest workers," who were brought in from Turkey and Morocco when Holland was short of labor; others are from Dutch territories like the Antilles; still others have parents who came to the Netherlands seeking political asylum. Unemployment is high in these immigrant communities, as is the dropout rate, and the shift in the city's population has coincided with a dramatic increase in crime. Rotterdam's murder rate now approaches New York's.

Most of the neighborhoods that van der Horst and I visited were the sort of slums that the Dutch point to to explain Fortuyn's popularity. But what the Dutch count as slums struck me as entirely unremarkable—indeed, applying the standards of the American inner city, the neighborhoods were practically middle class. Even in the worst sections of Rotterdam, the windows, I noticed, had no bars, and the buildings seemed in good repair. It was explained to me that when a neighborhood did slip too far, the government stepped in, tore the whole thing down, and started over. (Unhappy with the condition of central Rotterdam, the Dutch government has decided to build an altogether new downtown on the south side of the Nieuwe Maas.)

Toward the end of his tour, van der Horst took me, at my request, to the edge of the city, to a place called a *gedoogzone*, or tolerance zone. Prostitution is legal in the Netherlands, but streetwalking is not, except in a *gedoogzone*. Rotterdam's, I had been told, was a blight on the city, and a source of contention facing the new city council. After a few wrong turns, van der Horst found the zone—basically a walled-in lot—in an area of wholesalers, warehouses, and multilevel garages. It was early evening, and only a few women, most of whom appeared to be junkies, were there. The scene conveyed abject misery and, at the same time, a certain cheerful Dutch orderliness. Benches had been provided, presumably at government expense, along with a tidy kiosklike shelter. Covering one wall of the zone was a bright-yellow mural with a floral theme; another was decorated with Pop-art messages—tiny red lights spelling out the joys of anonymous sex. Van der Horst translated one for me: "Fall into my lap."

The subtitle of "The Low Sky" is "Understanding the Dutch," and I asked van der Horst how Fortuyn had fit in. On the one hand, he observed that the Dutch, as a rule, have little affection for ostentation or self-promotion. "If you're successful, you must express a modest appearance," he told me. On the other hand, he acknowledged, Fortuyn was "typically Dutch in his idea that this is a small country, that national pride is a good thing, and, especially, that we have a more rational culture than the rest of the world."



"Shouldn't we be sporting something?"

• •

One night some years ago, Fortuyn and Arendo Joustra, who is now the editor-in-chief of *Elsevier*, had dinner together in a Rotterdam restaurant. Afterward, Fortuyn headed out to his favorite bar, the Shaft, and asked Joustra to come along. The bar had different dress—or, rather, undress—codes for different nights: some nights no shirts; others no pants. This particular night called for no clothes. According to Joustra, who recounted the story to me, inside the bar Fortuyn bumped into a Rotterdam city official. Fortuyn and the official, both naked except for their shoes, spent the rest of the night discussing municipal policy.

At fifty-four, Fortuyn was tall and slim, with a shaved head and piercing blue eyes. Many women I spoke to told me they had found him extremely attractive. "He had flair, he had style," a petite redhead I met at the airport said. "If he wasn't gay, I said to my husband, I would take him immediately." When clad, Fortuyn favored Armani suits with matching ties and handkerchiefs. (*Esquire* once named him the best-dressed man in Holland.)

Fortuyn never made the slightest effort to hide the fact that he was gay. On the contrary, he was continually alluding to—even flaunting—his homosexuality, announcing on TV, for example, that he thought ejaculate tasted like Berenburg, a Dutch liqueur. Anywhere else, such forthrightness might have been considered politically courageous, if also suicidal; in Holland it wasn't clear what political significance it had. Last year, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to treat same-sex marriages exactly like more traditional unions, and nowadays, with adoption a commonplace, the stereotype of Dutch gay life is a middle-aged couple spending the weekend at home with the kids. "Mothers are proud of their sons if they find a nice boyfriend, and they lead a cozy, bourgeois life," van der Horst told me.

A few days after Fortuyn's exhumation, I took the train to Tilburg, thirty-five miles southeast of Rotterdam. Every summer, Tilburg hosts a fair that, over the course of nine days, attracts some two million people. The day I visited was Roze Maandag, or "Pink Monday," and everything—the rides, the game booths, the fun houses, the candy stalls, the beer stands, even the herring carts—was festooned in pink. I got to the fair in midafternoon, and already it was so mobbed that it was difficult to walk. Gay couples and straight couples, children and parents, men in black leather and elderly ladies leaning on walkers were all milling around, while legions of volunteers solicited contributions to the Dutch AIDS Foundation, and men in pink dresses handed out lollipops.

I had an appointment to meet Henk Krol, the editor of a biweekly magazine, the *Gay Krant*, at a party that the magazine was hosting at the edge of the fair. "In the foreign press, it was indicated several times that Fortuyn was an extreme-right-wing figure," Krol told me once we had got far enough away from the party's sound system to talk. "I don't believe that. He was a populist. He tried to explain things as easily as possible to a general public. In the beginning, you heard people say, 'I think he's the right guy, but he's gay,' and within a year that disappeared. Within a year, a large part of the Dutch population admired Pim Fortuyn regardless of whether he was gay or straight.

"We like when people are a little bit different," Krol continued. "On the other hand, we love to have rules. I think in your country you smoke probably more pot than we do here in the Netherlands. We see that people want to smoke marijuana, so we make rules. We know there is prostitution—O.K., let's make a rule for that. We know that there are gay people—O.K., let's regulate it. People think that we are modern, liberal in that. I don't think so. It's very Calvinistic—as long as it is in the rules, we like it."

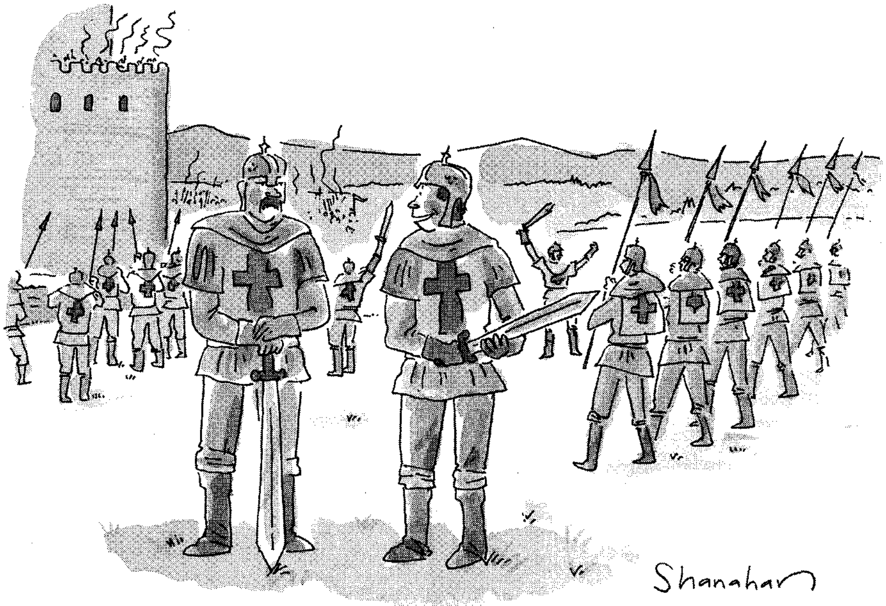
Krol interrupted his meditation to go hear a man in a black velvet gown sing a version of an old Beatles song—"Something in the way he moves." Later, he introduced me to his husband, a hairdresser from Eindhoven. We strolled around the fair, and Krol pointed out a booth where the Dutch police were trying to recruit gay cops. He also recalled an incident that had occurred during a visit he had made to the fair with Fortuyn on Roze Mandaag three years ago.

"I saw him coming out of the little shop of a fortune-teller, and he was pale," Krol told me. "I asked him what had happened, and he said, 'Well, it's so strange. She told me a few things, and I really believe her.' 'But what did she tell you?' He said, 'Well, I can't tell you.' And from that moment on it became a running joke. Whenever I saw Pim, whenever he called me, I always had the same question: 'Just tell me—what did she say to you?' And he never wanted to tell me.

"Then, three weeks before his assassination, I interviewed him and he said, 'You always have that same question, and now I want to tell you.'" Krol lowered his voice to ominous effect: "'She said that my end would be terrible, and that I would have'—how do you say it?—'a violent death.'"

For the eight years leading up to May's election, the Netherlands was run by what was known as the "purple coalition." The coalition was made up of parties that should, in principle, have been antagonists—the left-leaning Labor Party and the conservative Liberals. (It also included a third, smaller party called Democrats 66, and, as many commentators pointed out, the colors of the three groups combined actually made brown.) In The Hague, this kind of arrangement wasn't considered particularly unusual. The Dutch—half admiringly, but also half satirically—refer to their peculiar brand of politics as the "poldermodel," from the word *polder:* a piece of land that, through enormous collective effort, is reclaimed from the sea.

On the matter of immigration, the official stance of the purple coalition was that there was, in fact, nothing the matter. "Immigrants, and to a lesser extent asylum seekers, are a taboo subject in the Netherlands, where it is extremely important always to be politically correct on ethnic issues" is how a guidebook published two years ago for people doing business in the country put it. Fortuyn had no interest in accommodating this polderized consensus. Charged with bigotry, he would turn the criticism on its head. "In Holland, homosexuality is treated the same way as heterosexuality: in what Islamic country does that happen?" he demanded. Also speaking of Islam, Fortuyn once asked, "How can you respect a culture if the woman has to walk several steps behind her man, has to stay in the kitchen and keep her mouth



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shut?" Unlike Le Pen et al., who lace their xenophobia with anti-Semitism, Fortuyn claimed the Jews—or, at least, secular Jews—as his allies. In his book "Fifty Years Israel, But for How Long?" he worried that the Jewish state, as a democracy, might not be able to survive the threat posed by its fundamentalist neighbors. "Christianity and Judaism have gone through the process of enlightenment, making them creative and constructive elements in society," he said in an interview shortly before his death. "That didn't happen in Islam. There is a tension between the values of modern society and the principles of Islam."

Versions of Fortuyn's argument were repeated to me over and over in the Netherlands, sometimes by his admirers, but also often by his critics. I heard about young couples being harassed on street corners for showing affection, and about women who no longer felt comfortable walking alone. Several times, I was told the story of a Rotterdam Imam who, citing the Koran, had declared that homosexuals were lower than swine. Cyriel Triesscheijn is the head of the Rotterdam Anti-Discrimination Action Council, a group that sued Fortuyn for some of his attacks against Islam. Triesscheijn said that while teachers in Rotterdam used to feel secure about being openly gay, as the number of immigrant students continued to rise this was changing. "Homosexual teachers are going back into the closet," he told me.

Eventually, I began to feel that I had heard too many such stories. Not all Holland's immigrants are Muslims, and, of course, not all Muslims are fundamentalists. The gravest problems associated with immigration, meanwhile—strained social services, "white flight," and crime—have little or nothing to do with religious ideology. By eliding these complexities, Fortuyn arrived at a form of xenophobia ideally suited to a nation that prides itself on its tolerance. The problem with immigrants is that *they* are intolerant. In this context, Fortuyn's flamboyant gayness probably was an asset. After all, if you're willing to back a man who brags about sleeping with Arab boys, how much of a bigot can you really be?

On May 6th, nine days before the parliamentary election, *De Volkskrant* published a survey taken by an independent polling firm. It predicted that Lijst Pim Fortuyn would be the largest party in Parliament, making Fortuyn the presumptive Prime Minister. That afternoon, Fortuyn gave a two-hour radio interview at a media complex outside Amsterdam. He walked out into the parking lot where his car was waiting and was shot at six times. He bled to death before paramedics could get him into an ambulance.

In the final weeks of the campaign, Fortuyn had been repeatedly heckled and threatened; protesters held up signs that said "*Stop de Hollandse Haider!*" and at one point someone threw cream pies doused with urine at his face. Still, the circumstances of the assassination—the first of significance in the Netherlands since 1584—were baffling. Fortuyn's killer was

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a thirty-two-year-old militant animal-rights activist named Volkert van der Graaf. When journalists looked for statements that Fortuyn had made on the subject of animal rights, they couldn't find any. (It did come out that one of the members of the L.P.F.'s parliamentary slate was the head of the national pig farmers' association.) At this point, it is widely assumed that van der Graaf was acting alone, out of some mixture of personal and political rage; nevertheless, I met several Rotterdammers who said they were confident that he was part of a larger conspiracy. "Pim was too outspoken—they were afraid of that," one woman told me, without specifying who "they" were. In his prison cell, in Amsterdam, van der Graaf is under continuous video surveillance, mostly, it seems, so that if he commits suicide the government will have a record of it. (Van der Graaf has protested the filming by going on a hunger strike that is now in its seventh week.)

After Fortuyn's murder, the election went ahead as scheduled. Pim-less, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn won twenty-six seats, which was more than any of the parties belonging to the purple coalition, but seventeen fewer than the Christian Democrats. Subsequently, the Party was invited to join a new government to be headed by Jan Peter Balkenende, a former professor who has been dubbed the Dutch Harry Potter for his youthful but owlish looks. At the time of Fortuyn's exhumation, Balkenende was still in the process of putting this government together, and, in the negotiations, the L.P.F. managed to secure control of four Ministries, including the Ministry of Immigration and Integration. Almost immediately, it began running into difficulties. By a curious twist, an L.P.F. member named Philomena Bijlhout became the first foreign-born Cabinet member in Dutch history when she was named to the position of Junior Minister of Family and Emancipation. The very day she was sworn in, Bijlhout was forced to resign, after a television station reported that she had lied about her service in the Surinamese militia. Not much later, L.P.F. members ousted the Party's first post-Fortuyn leader, a onetime Defense Ministry spokesman named Mat Herben. Just a week ago, an L.P.F. member was suspended from Parliament on the ground that he had a criminal record.

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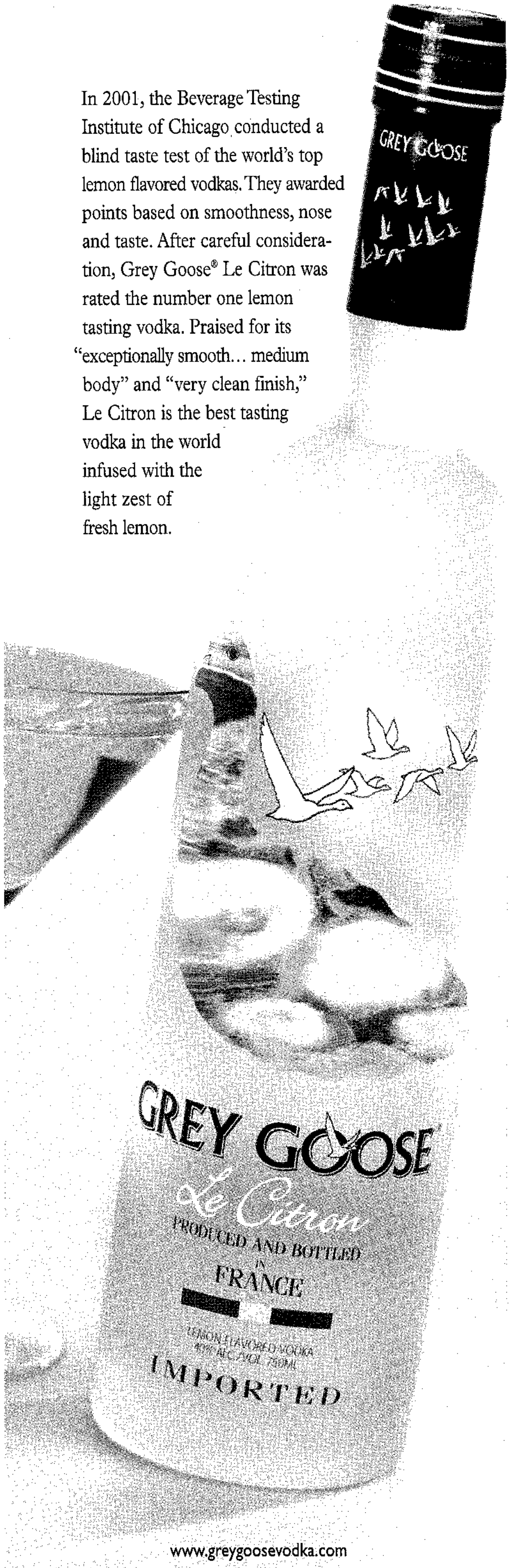
On my last day in Rotterdam, I went to visit the Stadhuis, or City Hall, where Fortuyn had briefly served on the city council—the only elective office he ever held. A grand Beaux Arts structure and one of the few downtown buildings that were not destroyed in the war, the Stadhuis is filled with memorials to famous Rotterdammers, including the city's most celebrated citizen, Erasmus, who was born there—illegitimately—in 1469. In the council chamber, I saw the chair that Fortuyn had sat in, now left empty in his memory. I also stopped by his local Party office, which was still stocked with Fortuyn paraphernalia—posters and pins and photographs and campaign flyers. From every wall, I felt Fortuyn gazing down at me, and in all the pictures, it seemed to me, he wore much the same expression—a smile at once engaging and mocking.

One of the many lingering questions about Fortuyn is what he himself made of his unlikely career. In Rotterdam, I was offered many accounts of his motives, none of which, interestingly enough, had much to do with actually running the Netherlands. His real goal, I was told, was to make a point or, alternatively, to shake things up or to start a movement or—and this was a popular theory—just to be loved.

Recently, Harry Mens, a Dutch real-estate magnate and a confidant of Fortuyn's, told *De Telegraaf* that, for all his boasting, Fortuyn never expected, or even wanted, to get as far as he did: "You know what Pim had in mind? A small party with about fifteen seats, so that he could act like Pietje Bell"—a prankster in Dutch children's stories—"in Parliament while continuing his lucrative life. When the polls went up like they did, he got very nervous." In the same interview, Mens commented on the impossibility of protecting Fortuyn: "Pim sent half of his bodyguards home because he did not like their faces, and with the other half he dived into a bar. He had to help them to get home the next morning." ♦



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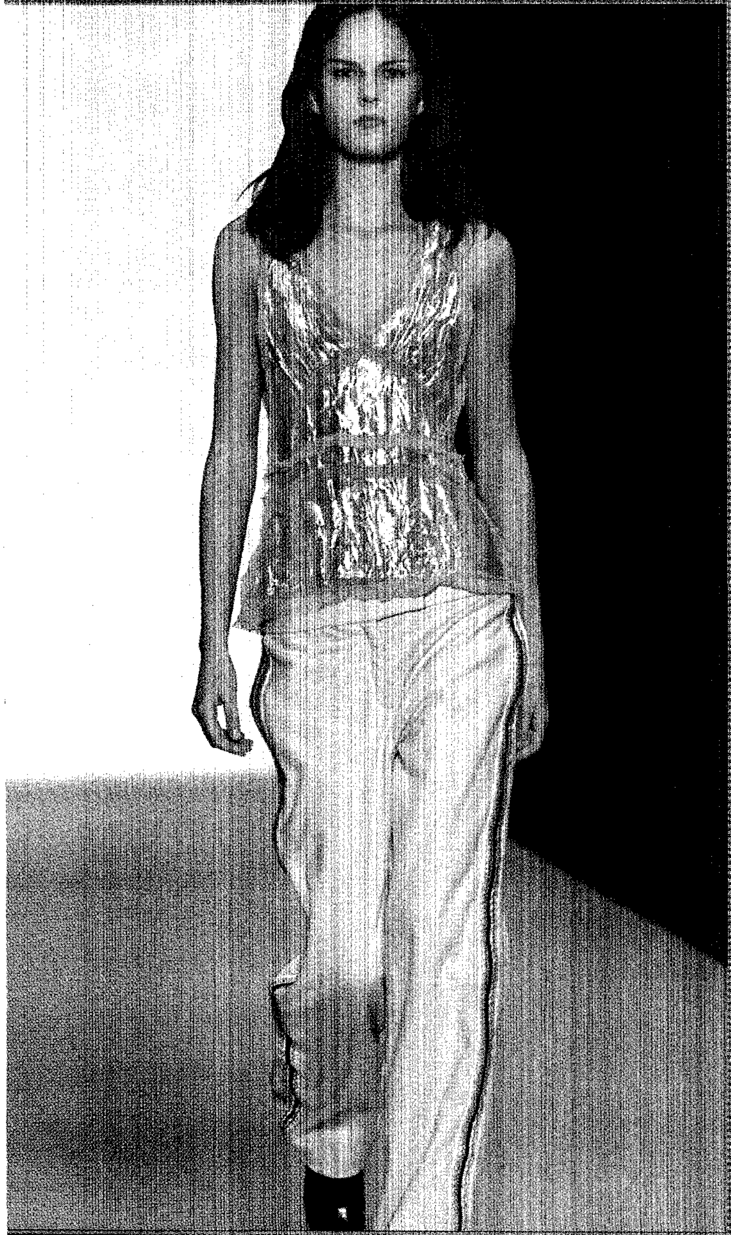

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I AM FASHION

Guess who Puff Daddy wants to be?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

The Air France hostess was pleasant but unwilling to compromise. "This flight closes in three minutes," she said. "We don't make exceptions." Chuck Bone, who was sitting in the Concorde's first-class waiting lounge at J.F.K., reached casually for his cell phone. It was 7:12 A.M. on a Monday in July. The Concorde was scheduled to depart for Paris at eight, and its passengers generally consider even the briefest delay intolerable. Bone, who was wearing a blue-and-white tracksuit and had a simple diamond stud in one ear, started talking. "Where are you guys? You need to get him here now. They are closing the flight." He listened for a moment and then turned to the woman in charge of the lounge. "He is in the airport," he said. "He'll be at the terminal in five minutes." The hostess, who was now flanked by three colleagues, was unmoved. "Seven-fifteen and we close it," she said. "I am sorry, but Mr. Puff Daddy must come by then, or he will have to take another plane."

Mr. Puff Daddy, the thirty-two-year-old rap impresario, restaurateur, clothing entrepreneur, bon vivant, actor, and Page Six regular—who is also known as P. Diddy, and whose mother calls him Sean John Combs—was expected in Paris within hours. He needed to be on the 8 A.M. flight: it was the first day of fashion week, and Donatella Versace had invited him to sit in the front row at her couture show. Versace's shows always attract enormous publicity, usually more for the celebrities in the audience than for the models on the runway. The Concorde was Combs's only hope of making it on time. Jeffrey Tweedy, the vice-president of Combs's clothing company, Sean John, was in the lounge looking jumpy. He poured himself a cup of tea and took some valerian. He stared unhappily at the oversized Panerai Luminor watch on his wrist. 7:13 A.M. Two minutes to go.

A few dozen tastefully dressed men and women with chic handbags and understated accessories began boarding the flight. Still no sign of Combs. For the past three days, he had been in Atlanta, at a music-industry event sponsored by Bad Boy Entertainment, the record company he has run for nearly a decade. There had been a party the final night, and Combs didn't leave until around four in the morning. He was driven directly to his chartered Gulfstream G4 jet. By 6:30 A.M., he was on the ground at Teterboro Airport, in suburban New Jersey, but the morning traffic on the George Washington Bridge had begun to build.

By seven-twenty-five, the passengers in the lounge had checked in and most were already on board. The Air France flight attendants were eager to close the door. One was tapping her foot. Everyone in the Combs entourage—Tweedy; Bone, a friend from high school; Mar Sabado, one of Puffy's assistants; her boyfriend, a designer in dreadlocks named Emmett Harrell—was on his or her cell phone or working his or her Motorola two-way pager. Sabado was on the phone with Combs's twenty-eight-year-old chief aide, Norma Augenblick, who was in Paris, making certain that everything was in place for Combs's arrival at the hotel: champagne in ice buckets; a sufficient supply of Puff Daddy's favorite tequila (1800); plenty of Cuban cigars, either Monte Cristo No. 2 or Cohiba. Then, there were the racks of clothing to unpack and organize. Puff

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HERB RITTS

"Fashion is about leaving on your jacket and tie when other people are too hot to bother," Combs says.

"Lucky girl—she got one before he was hardwired."

Daddy does not travel light, and by the time he reached his hotel suite that evening he expected everything to be in order.

At seven-thirty, a man in a two-piece white terry-cloth outfit appeared at the far end of the terminal. He was wearing white tennis shoes, white socks, a skintight white terry-cloth hat pulled low over his forehead, and a large diamond ring on his right pinkie. He was walking slowly, and talking rapidly into his cell phone. The hostess wheeled around and left when he approached. He looked tired but clearly pleased to see his friends. He embraced the various members of his crew and then shook my hand. "I hope you are ready to seriously hang out in Paris," he said. "Because don't come with us if you can't stay out with us. I fully intend to show Paris the respect it deserves. We are going to rock that place to the ground."

His friends clapped once, the way football players do at the end of a huddle. Then they headed for the plane. It was seven-forty. As Combs turned toward the walkway heading onto the Concorde, a security agent gently put a hand on his shoulder and asked him to step aside; after all, even Al Gore gets searched these days. "Mr. Combs," the guard said. "Would it be possible to get your autograph?" Puff Daddy nodded, pinned his cell phone between his left shoulder and his ear, and, still talking, signed the back of an envelope.

"Thank you, sir," the security guard said. "Have a really nice trip."

Two minutes before takeoff, a stewardess came over and asked, hesitantly, if Combs might be willing to turn off his phone. He apologized, then snapped it shut. Despite his outsized image, Combs is a not a big man, and he often speaks in a whisper. When he addressed the stewardess, she had to lean in toward the seat to hear him. "I forget how fast this plane travels," he said. "I was trying to explain it to my son before." "Eet eez zee speed of a boullet," the woman replied. "It eez exactly like we are shot out of zee gun." By the time she had finished describing the velocity of the plane, its cruising altitude, and what happens when the flight breaks the sound barrier, Combs was asleep.

Within moments of touching down in Paris, Combs and his crew were back on their phones. Puffy, now wide awake, seemed to be having trouble with his, so Tweedy, who was sitting one row behind him, offered some advice: "You have to dial 001 to call a New York cell phone, even if the person is in France," he explained. Combs whipped around in his seat. "Yo, Jeff, excuse me," he said, in a low, steady voice. "This is my fourteenth Concorde flight. I'm an international fucking player. I'll tell you how to use a phone."

Combs had come to Paris for fun, but it was fun with a purpose. He considers himself (as do many others) among the most fashionable people in the world, and the business of fashion has become an increasingly central part of his life. Sean John, the clothing company he started three years ago, has emerged as one of the best-selling—and most highly regarded—men's lines in America. Combs's runway show in New York last fall met with praise from even the most skeptical fashion professionals. "It was better than anything in Europe," Kim Hastreiter, the editor of *Paper*, the downtown fashion magazine, told me. "It was perfectly presented, perfectly original American fashion." In 2001, Sean John's sales, which were thirty million dollars in 1999, rose to nearly two hundred and fifty million.

This year, along with Ralph Lauren and Marc Jacobs, Combs was nominated by the Council of Fashion Designers of America as the menswear designer of the year. He introduced his line with the type of T-shirts and baggy jeans that characterize hip-hop clothing brands like FUBU and Eckō, but he quickly graduated to a more sophisticated look, with a modern, slightly off-kilter approach to classic preppy clothes.This month, he will bring out Blue—a more expensive line of denim directed at older customers. Combs and Tweedy also have ambitious plans to enter the lucrative and complicated world of women's wear, and to open two Sean John stores in New York next year. At a time when many designers are struggling just to stay in business, department stores seem eager for anything Sean John can supply. "Puffy sells second only to Ralph in many of our stores," Kal Ruttenstein, the longtime fashion director of Bloomingdale's, told me. "Some of that is because of his name, of course. But his clothes are actually quite wonderful, and you would be amazed to see how many types of people wear them."

Combs first appeared at the haute-couture shows in Paris five years ago. With his hip-hop credentials and his love of the spotlight, not to mention a past that includes highly public moments of violence, Combs provided exactly what the fashion crowd craves: a frisson of danger without much threat of it. He represented the ultimate expression of nineteen-nineties style: excessive, ironic, and a tiny bit thuggish. He wore fur and leather and draped himself in enough diamonds to rival Princess Caroline of Monaco. Combs made his first visits to the Louvre and to Versailles, which he described to me as "some awe-inspiring shit." He was escorted to many of the shows by Anna Wintour, the editor of *Vogue*. "Puffy is so wonderfully over the top and flamboyant, and, God, do we need that in our business," Wintour told me. "Fashion goes through severely dull periods and we must have relief. Puff provides it."

Donatella Versace, who knows glitz if she knows anything, was counting on Combs's presence to add some adrenaline to her show. The show was scheduled to begin at eight. At six, Combs was working his way through customs at Charles de Gaulle Airport. The drive into the city would take at least an hour; then he would need to change from his travel clothes into a more fashionable, light-gray, chalk-striped suit, designed by Donatella. He would have to look, in the phrase coined by Andre Harrell, his former boss at Uptown Records, "ghetto fabulous." That meant choosing appropriate accessories: a silver tie, smoke-colored sunglasses, diamond-and-platinum earrings, a bracelet or two, a couple of diamond rings the size of cherry tomatoes, and a watch covered with jewels and worth nearly a million dollars.

There is nothing in fashion more deliciously low than a Versace show. The ambience is one of excess, with security guards stationed along the runway and models regularly spilling out of their tops. The show, which was held at the Palais de Chaillot this year, was delayed. Puffy didn't leave his hotel until eight-thirty. He was with Kim Porter, the mother of one of his two children. (She has another child, whom Combs supports and treats as his own.) By the time they arrived, the bleachers were filled: the Hilton sisters, Nicky and Paris, were there, along with their parents, Rick and Kathy. Two of the Miller sisters—Alexandra von Furstenberg and Princess Marie-Chantal of Greece (along with her exiled husband, Crown Prince Pavlos)—were also in the audience. (They are daughters of Robert Miller, the duty-free billionaire.) These young women are among the dwindling number of people on earth with the means and the desire to pay twenty thousand dollars for a dress they might wear once.

Combs and Porter, who was dressed elegantly in black and wore a diamond necklace that, next to Puffy's jewels, seemed almost demure, were seated beside the actress Elizabeth Hurley, whose floor-length green evening gown was covered with paisley swirls and glittering stars and cut in a remarkably low V. Hurley wore a silver pendant and pink mules. The front row was a spectacle of preening, with Hurley, George Michael, Rupert Everett, David Furnish (Elton John's lover), the singer Ashanti, and the downtown celebrity actress Chloë Sevigny posing constantly for the cameras. The most photographed guest, by far, was Combs. (*People*, *Us Weekly*, and about eight European magazines—many of them named *Hello!* in a variety of languages—ran pictures of him with Porter, Hurley, or Donatella Versace. "Wow, Puff Daddeee," the photographers screeched. "Mr. Diddeee, can we see the diamonds?")

The fashion show itself lasted about fifteen minutes. Puffy spent much of that time taking pictures of other celebrities with a tiny camera. As soon as the last girl left the runway, he and his friends, led by three security men, went backstage. Versace was having a party at the Ritz Club later that evening, and Puffy would make an appearance, but he still needed to pay his respects to his host. She was surrounded by her staff, some of whom find Combs an unwelcome addition to their world. ("He is like a mezzo Donatella," one of them said to me. "He's a fashion Mini-Me: half the talent, half the glamour, just as demanding.") Air kisses were exchanged in the dressing area. "It blew me away," Puff said to Versace, about the collection, which included a patchwork coat made from more than eighty types of antique fabric; a short jacket with blue crocodile skin; and a silver ballgown of antique brocade with a silver lamé skirt. Versace beamed. She wore her peroxided hair straight and long, her lipstick was brown, and her skin was a peculiar shade of gray. Puffy embraced her, and then looked at his assistant Norma and nodded. It was after ten o'clock and, as he put it a few minutes later, he was ready to "escalate." Norma passed the word to the security detail, and within minutes the entourage was gone.

RED
YELLOW
ORANGE
OCHRE
PURPLE

Combs moves like a candidate for the Presidency. He is always late, he is never alone. (Solitude seems to make him nervous.) Even when he needs to travel a single city block—say, from his Bad Boy offices, in midtown, to the MTV studios, in Times Square—he is loaded into an S.U.V. and driven. This is not purely vanity; Combs has been particularly conscious of security ever since his best friend, the rap star Christopher Wallace, who was better known as the Notorious B.I.G., was gunned down in 1997 in Los Angeles. Combs was with Wallace the night he died, and among his many tattoos there is one on his right wrist, noting B.I.G.'s date of birth and date of death. (The crime, generally attributed to an East Coast–West Coast hip-hop rivalry that also took the life of Tupac Shakur, has never been solved.)

The group was whisked into an underground passage and out a back door. There were scores of kids waiting in the street, and when they saw Combs they started screaming, "Pouf Daddeee, Pouf Daddeee!" and quickly surrounded him, seeking autographs. Combs signed them. (Every time he left a restaurant, hotel, or club in Paris, he was delayed by honeymooners, tourists, and other people wanting him to sign an autograph or pose with them for pictures. I never saw him refuse.) Combs wanted to go to the hotel for a drink before heading to Nobu for dinner. After dinner, he went to Versace's party, and then to another club, where he remained until dawn. Versace had booked Combs and his entourage into the Hyatt Regency Paris-Madeleine, and he had a suite on the seventh floor, with a separate elevator key. It was a nice hotel, well situated in the center of town. But it was an unusual choice. In Paris, the beautiful people stay at the Ritz or the Plaza Athénée. Many in the fashion crowd prefer the intimacy of the Hotel Côstes. Nobody stays at the Hyatt. (The second night he was in Paris, Puffy visited Vin Diesel in his suite at the Plaza Athénée—a duplex decorated in white, with a large terrace off the bedroom—and he quickly saw what he was missing. "Norma, we need to stay here," Puffy announced. "Time for a change. Get me a room like this." Norma had anticipated this whim, but the Plaza is always full during fashion week, and there was nothing she could do.)

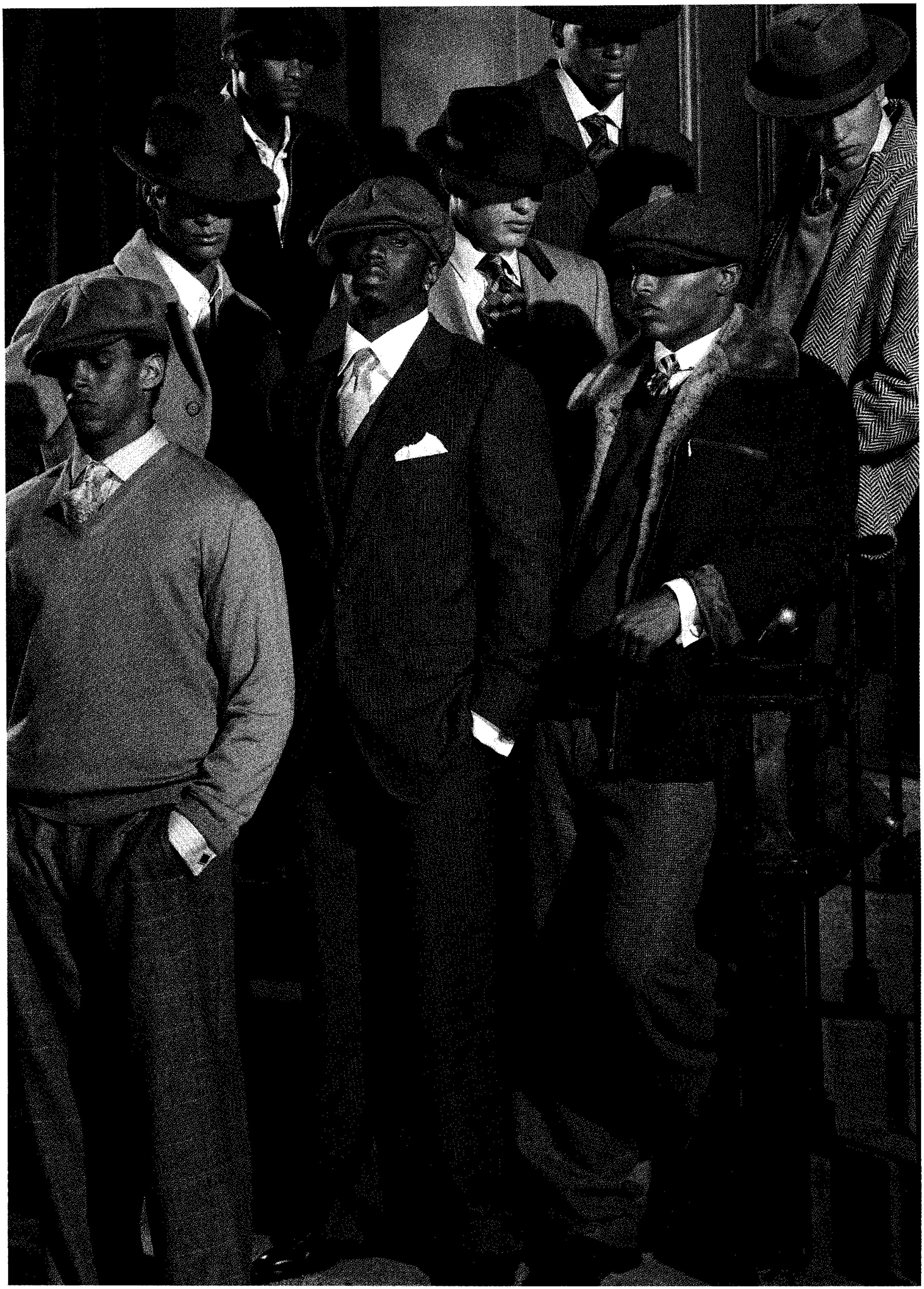
Not that the Hyatt was a hardship: the suite had a baby-grand piano and a large terrace. There were several garment racks in the living room, with more than a dozen suits, scores of shirts, leather jackets, what appeared to be twenty or so belts, and twice as many ties. There were enough shoes to last a lifetime, and enough sneakers to outfit the Knicks. Some of the clothes had been provided by Versace, but most had been flown over from New York. "Can you possibly wear all this in four days?" I asked Combs. "All I can do is try," he replied, with a wink. Sunglasses had been arranged in three rows on a high table next to a couch in the living room. There were about ten pairs in each row; each pair was in its original case, with the top flipped up. It looked like the optical counter at Bergdorf's. We walked onto the terrace. Montmartre and at least a dozen church steeples stood out against the pale sky. Despite the hour, it was still light. A thin wafer of a moon hung above the city. Emmett and Bone were sitting with Tweedy, sipping wine, taking in the view.

Combs, who often seems uneasy in a crowd unless he is performing, stood self-consciously on the edge of the terrace. "Before we get on our way, I just want to say one thing," he said. "We are in Paris and we are here to learn from one another. We are going to philosophize and improvise and improve each other's minds. God gave us the chance to be together in this wonderful place and we are going to profit from it. I want to drink mimosas at the Eiffel Tower at dawn. I want us to have fun. But we have to be together to do it. You will not leave me and I will not leave you, and we will have the total experience." (Combs never seems still. Even when he's sitting alone in a corner, he pays attention to everything going on around him.) Within minutes, we were off to Nobu, where the Hilton girls and many models, designers, fashion editors, and a few hangers-on were having dinner. After several seating configurations proved untenable, Combs got the waiters to join three tables, and then he ordered approximately two of everything on the menu. When the waiter finished reading back the order, Puffy told him to bring champagne, wine, and two bottles of tequila. "But it has to be 1800 tequila," he said. "And bring it to the table. I want to see the labels."

Dinner ended around twelve-thirty. The Versace party was already under way. By the time we arrived at the Ritz Club, a long line had formed, and the bouncers were on edge. Inside, Chloë Sevigny sat on a bench, posing for photographers, and Liz Hurley was playing blackjack with Versace. Despite their presence, it was an oddly B-list crowd, made up mostly of unknown models, publicists, and Versace's own employees. The Hiltons were there, but they are at every party. At one-thirty, Puffy and his friends packed themselves back into their cars and took off in search of better music and cooler people. They found both. The place, near the Marais, was sweltering and crowded. Waves of hip-hop music rolled across the dance floor. The Nelly song "Hot in Herre" was playing. It was the song of the summer, and, despite the heat, nobody wanted to remain seated. Soon after Combs arrived, the d.j. shouted out the obligatory greeting—"P. Diddy's in the house!"—and then played Puffy's No. 1 song "I Need a Girl (Part 1)."

Most people assume that the song is about Combs's relationship with Jennifer Lopez: "Every time I think about your pretty smile, and how we used to drive the whole city wild, damn I wish you would've had my child, a pretty little girl with Diddy's style." Few couples since Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor have appeared more often in the gossip columns. While Combs and Lopez were together, it was as if two corporations, AOL and Time Warner, say, had merged; as much as anything else, they were a marketing phenomenon. When I asked whether "I Need a Girl" was, in fact, about Lopez, Combs laughed ruefully, then shook his head. "It's a fucking song, man. Would you ask a writer if his book is real or fiction? It's just a song."

Gwen Stefani appeared on the edge of the dance floor. In the echo chamber of the fashion world, Stefani is currently among the most adored of celebrities. Puff was thrilled to see her. He grabbed her by the leg and gracefully swung her around so that her head nearly dipped to the floor, then he reached for her foot and slowly caressed it. At that point, he turned to me and started to sort of rap: "I am fashion because I live fashion," he said. It was so hot in the club that it was difficult to breathe, but Puffy was still wearing his suit, and not one button was undone. His tie was so tightly knotted it seemed to put a strain on his Adam's apple. A diamond stud was planted in each earlobe. A thick rope of a diamond bracelet—from Jacob, the New York jeweller to the hip-hop élite—adorned his wrist. He said, "From my manicure to my pedicure, from my head to my toe, it's the swagger that I show the world, it's my face, baby. It's my walk, my attitude." He rubbed the wisps of hair on his chin. "Fashion is about leaving on your jacket and tie when other people are too hot to bother." He was also wearing a yellow diamond ring, which looked like a piece of rock candy. "Details, baby. It's all about the details. Look at the arm. The ring. The watch. Look at my canary-yellow diamond. Impeccable. Admit it, I am impeccable." He let out a wolf howl, and dozens of dancers started to cheer. At this point, Norma, who is keenly protective, and who, depending on the hour, is a corporate executive, an accountant, a fixer, a party planner, or a high-end concierge, shouted across the floor to me, "This is all off the record, it's off the record!" Combs waved her away. "I don't want this off the record. I've got a lot of shit to say about fashion. It don't really matter what you



Clothes from the Sean John autumn collection. Combs, center, says, "It's the swagger that I show the world, it's my face, baby."

write about me. Because I'll still be a fashion god, no matter what."

Puff walked to a table where his friends were sipping Cristal and eating strawberries. ("I don't even drink the shit," he told me. "They bring it wherever I am. It's a cliché.") He plunged his arm into a bucket of ice water. Then he waved it in my face. "Look at that ring," he shouted. "Look at the way it glistens. I am a damn fashionable motherfucker, and I'm not ashamed to admit it."

Puff Daddy believes that he inherited some of his fashion sense from his father. "People say we have a similar approach to fashion," he told me one day. "They say he was the fliest man around. But he died when I was three. I saw a couple pictures of him, and that was all." Combs's father, Melvin, spent many years as a limousine driver, and his mother, Janice, told him that his father had died "in his car." That was true, but Melvin Combs didn't die in an accident; he was a drug dealer, and one night in 1972 he was shot dead in his car in Central Park. Combs's mother raised Sean and his younger sister, Keisha, alone, working three jobs—as a school-bus driver, a teacher at a local day-care center, and an attendant for children with cerebral palsy—while her mother watched the children. (Combs and his mother still speak to or see each other several times a week; his sister works for him at Bad Boy; and one of his tattoos is dedicated to his grandmother, who died in 1994.) When Combs was ten, he spent a summer with the Amish in Pennsylvania Dutch country, through the Fresh Air Fund. Not long after that, the family moved to Mount Vernon, where Sean attended Catholic schools. He graduated from Mount St. Michael Academy, in the Bronx.

Even as a boy, Combs was exceptionally driven. Although he has been called the "black Sinatra," his early role models were closer to the president of the 4-H club than to the coolest kid in school. "He came home one day and told me he wanted to start a paper route," his mother recalled when I went to see her at her apartment overlooking the Hudson. "That is how he started. He always wanted to work and make his money. We had a Cadillac car and a house, and he liked life like that," she told me. "Of course, he loves clothes. I do, too. I always made things nice in my house. I'm a fashionable-type person. My husband was a fantastic dresser. It seems to have worn off."

Combs attended Howard University—"the black Harvard," his mother called it. But he was obsessed with music, and was committed to a career as a producer. He begged Andre Harrell, who was then the president of Uptown Records and now runs Motown, for a job as an intern. Harrell didn't have much to lose—interns come free—and he was soon amazed by Puffy's capacity for work. Combs took the train from Washington to New York every week to work for Harrell; before long, he dropped out of Howard, moved into Harrell's house, and became the first (and last) teen-age division head at Uptown. "I wanted to get my hustle on," Combs says. His decision to leave school still bothers his mother. "I really was so disappointed about that," Janice told me. "A person works day and night just to educate a kid, and to be able to have a roof over your head and a school uniform. He was a fine student, and when he left college it was hard for me."

Although newspapers like to run pictures of Combs on a jet ski in Saint-Tropez, most of the time if you want to find him you would have better luck calling his office at Bad Boy than checking out the club scene. But no hip-hop musician has successfully positioned himself as a workaholic with a Catholic education who grew up in the suburbs. So Combs found a way to be hipper than anyone as commercial as he is, and to be more commercial than anyone as hip. It has proved to be a remarkably successful formula in music and in clothing. Combs made a name for himself as an energetic club kid who danced in a couple of music videos; by the early nineties, when he was in his twenties, he was a cheerleader for the life of excess that characterized the time. It was an insane era that would see Yahoo! become worth more than General Motors.

From the start, Combs was criticized as a mediocre and derivative rapper. That assessment has not changed, although his 1997 record "No Way Out" sold more than seven million copies and won two Grammys. It is as a talent

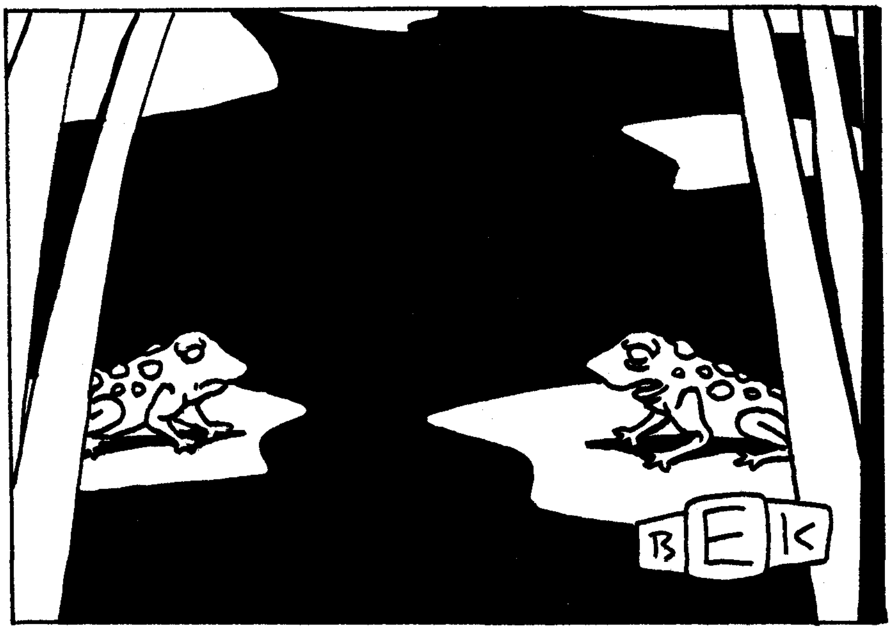
CHECKROOM
SIPRESS

"I had a hat."

scout, packager, and creator of deals that he has met with true success. His first act, Jodeci, sold seven million records. Since then, Combs has produced the work of Mary J. Blige, Faith Evans, and many others. More important, though, he discovered Christopher Wallace, a former crack dealer who rapped as the Notorious B.I.G. By 1997, the year B.I.G. was murdered, his albums, "Ready to Die" and "Life After Death," which drew a chilling, nihilistic portrait of life for an urban black man, had turned him into one of the seminal voices of the decade.

Combs's career has been punctuated by violence. In 1991, he and the rapper Heavy D, among others, promoted an AIDS benefit at City College; too many tickets were sold, there was a stampede, and nine people were crushed to death. In 1999, he and two others were arrested for beating a rival record-company executive in his offices at Interscope Records (with a chair, a telephone, and a champagne bottle). Although Combs was asked only to pay the executive a fine and take a one-day anger-management course, his image suffered badly; street toughs didn't respect him, and his middle-class fans were appalled. Then, just after midnight on December 27, 1999, Combs was involved in an incident at a Manhattan night club, in which three people were shot. He fled with Jennifer Lopez in a Lincoln Navigator, but he was arrested and charged with gun possession and attempting to bribe his driver into taking the rap for him. After seven weeks of testimony, covered by New York's press as if it were Watergate, Combs was acquitted of all charges. The verdict was broadcast live on the networks.

The lowest point of Combs's career, though, came after the death of his friend Biggie. Combs was depressed for months, and his mother told me that she had been worried for his life. When I asked Combs whether he felt that he had seen more than his share of violence, he said, "Nearly every black man faces an unacceptable level of violence in this society. I'm not different. Money can shield you; it can protect you. But it doesn't make you white." Eventually, Combs recovered. His tribute to Biggie, "I'll Be Missing You," a remake of an eighties hit by the Police, won a Grammy, and remained at the top of the charts for twenty-eight weeks. It became his signature song. It also helped inaugurate a commercial boom in hip-hop that lasted until the end of the nineties.



"Are you kidding? I'd kill to have your warts."

That boom is over. Last year, only two of the top twenty-five pop CDs were recorded by rappers: Ja Rule and Nelly. Neither ranked among the top fifteen albums. Hip-hop fashion has, of course, always been tied to the music market. In the early eighties, kids in baggy jeans started listening to Grandmaster Flash and spray-painting their signatures on subway cars. A few years later, in reaction to the emerging marriage of music and fashion, Run-DMC positioned themselves as anti-glamour authentics ("Calvin Klein's no friend of mine /don't want nobody's name on my behind"). Around that time, the clothing line FUBU—"For Us By Us"—was created, so that minority people could wear clothes designed by minorities. By the nineties, though, rappers like the Notorious B.I.G. had embraced the culture of brand names; even their socks bore labels. "I put my hoes in N.Y. onto DKNY, Miami, D.C., prefer Versace," Biggie rapped on "Hypnotize" in 1997. "Every cutie wit a booty want a Coogi."

Early hip-hop clothing lines were not much different from vanity license plates; they were mostly about promoting the image of the star, not about fashion, per se; you can see Russell Simmons's affection for argyle vests, for example, in Phat Farm, or the Wu-Tang Clan's love of oversized T-shirts in Wu Wear. And, early on, Puffy sent sequins and lots of fur onto the runway. (Puffy loves fur; people still talk about his burgundy ostrich trenchcoat with the sheared-mink lining.)

If hip-hop music falters in the marketplace, will its fashion also be in danger? Several people told me that Combs was passé. "We don't listen to his music," a white Manhattan teen-ager who is a particular follower of rap told me. "And nobody I know would buy his clothes." One of New York's best-known fashion editors put it more baldly: "Oh, my God, Puffy is *sooo* two years ago."

But such criticism misses the point. Combs has never really wanted to be the hippest guy in the room; he wants to be the hippest *successful* guy in the room. He told me that his fashion and business idols are Ralph Lauren and Martha Stewart—two self-invented characters whose deft re-creations of America, real and imagined, have made their fortunes. "Those are the templates," he said. "When you look at what they have accomplished, it's magnificent." It is not surprising that he wants to leap out of the world of hip-hop, with its fetishization of Gucci and Fendi, and into the world of Ralph Lauren and Martha Stewart. "Here I think Puffy is very interesting," Kelefa Sanneh, who has written extensively about hip-hop and pop culture, told me. "You can see him shift away from the aspirational approach of the nineties. He is not a great rapper, or even a great producer. But he goes out and scoops up new beats and talent. In clothes, he seems to be doing the same thing. He is a mogul, and he is moving with the market."

Ralph Lauren and Martha Stewart are more than brands; they offer visions of the world. Where Lauren presents an ersatz interpretation of the suburban dream life, Stewart has turned the middle-class hearth and home into an industry. Puffy hopes to dignify the urban life and package it for people who may never have entered a city. He has managed to market his clothes to kids who are tutored for the E.R.B.s and the S.A.T.s. He is becoming to the street what Ralph Lauren is to Waspiness and Martha Stewart is to the ideal of the American homemaker. And Combs's empire continues to grow as rapidly as ever. "The thing I love about Puff is that he comes back," his assistant Norma told me. "After B.I.G. died, people thought he would go right down the toilet—then he put out a No. 1 album. During the trial, Jennifer dumped him, they said his music career was over, he would be going to prison—and even if he got off he would be through. Well, guess what? He has a best-selling record, he's a happy father, his clothing company absolutely rocks. Puffy will always come back. He's like nature."

ORCHID

Now that you are gone, you are everywhere.
Take this orchid, for instance,
its swollen lip, the scrawny stalk's one
descended testicle
as wrinkled as rhetoric on the bar-scene stump,
the golden years since
jingling in its purse. How else signal the bee?

In my swan-clip now languish urgent appeals
from the usual charities
lined up to be ignored. But your flags are up:
I see the flapping petals,
the whorl of sepals, their grinning come-on.
Always game, again
I'd head straight for the column's sweet trap.

Ducking under the puckered anther cap
to glide toward the stiff,
waxy sense of things, where male and female
hardly matter to one's heady
urge to pull back the glistening lobes
and penetrate the heart,
I fell for it every time, the sticky bead

laid down on my back as I huddled there
with whatever—mimicking
enemy or friend, the molecular musk
of each a triggering lure—
wanted the most of me. Can I leave now, too?
I have death's dust-seed
on me. I have it from touching you.

—J. D. McClatchy

During his trial, Combs worked on his collection; most nights after court, he sat with Tweedy and the design team and sketched out ideas. He would talk through a notion, and the designers would attempt to translate it into patterns, which he would evaluate. He told me that he founded Sean John because the clothes he saw bored him. "I felt there was a total lack of something," he said. "Fashion was dull, dead. I thought maybe we could bring in some life."

He never saw the clothes he designed as solely an extension of his hip-hop persona; rather, he regards his place in hip-hop culture as a forum for selling clothes. One day not long ago, I walked around the Sean John boutique at Bloomingdale's. I saw clothes simple and sophisticated enough to please Jil Sander. When you first look at them, the clothes seem as if they belonged at Brooks Brothers or Paul Stuart. Then you notice the lavender and mustard cardigans, the shiny mother-of-pearl buttons and the bold stitching on the coats. Sean John pants are sharply tailored, the textures are rich, and the buyers are often men in their thirties hoping to look cool.

Combs hired Jeffrey Tweedy, a former Ralph Lauren executive, as vice-president of his company. Tweedy, a dapper black man who grew up in Washington, D.C., got his first job stocking clothes at Britches of Georgetown. He sees or talks to Combs three or four times a day. "I was a little leery at first," he told me. "I thought, Whoa, what did I need with a celebrity cat who wanted to start yet another label? But the more I talked to him the more I realized he was completely able to do this. He is totally involved, yet willing to let people do their jobs." Sean John is now sold in more than twelve hundred stores. The company, while not yet competitive with Tommy Hilfiger or Ralph Lauren, has easily surpassed its competitors in the urban fashion market, FUBU, Phat Farm, and Eckō.

"We design for a hip young guy," Tweedy told me. "Loves clothing, very stylish, and has a bit of disposable income—not for a teen-ager but for a man who aspires to wear Gucci one day and Prada one day and to be able to afford the custom Zegna suits. Now, down the road we will try to develop a life-style brand. That's the goal."

As a fashion figure, Combs has transcended hip-hop completely. He has done more: black fashion has been ripped off and reinterpreted for many years, and Combs has helped take it back from the Tommy Hilfigers of the world. "There is this clear dialectic—it's sort of like jazz," Kim Hastreiter, of *Paper*, told me. "White designers forever would go to 125th Street to see what was happening. That is where they got their inspiration, their cool. Then the blacks turned that upside down. They took the icons of the rich and suburban and blasted them. This is when sweatshirts with the word 'Harvard' printed on them a hundred times emerged; the ghetto was making fun of the suburbs, and if the suburbs were about Mercedeses then the kids in the ghetto would wear a necklace with the word 'Mercedes' in block capitals." After the most recent Sean John runway show, Hastreiter wrote, in *Paper*, "He threw *bling bling* out the window and sent out a low-key, gorgeous ready-to-wear collection. This stuff could stand up to anything, anywhere in the world today."

The company has moved deliberately but with apparent ease in the marketplace. Some fashion veterans are thrilled by its success and the attention it has brought the industry; others find it hard to believe that a man who doesn't know how to sew is considered a successful designer. But the significance of Sean John is no longer questioned. One day while I was in Paris, I ran into Richard Buckley, who is the editor of *Vogue Hommes International*. "I just got an e-mail from this writer who asked me who I thought mattered in men's clothes these days," Buckley told me. "I said the only man who is doing anything important is Puff Daddy. Right now, he is all we got."

The second night of his stay in Paris, Puff Daddy threw a bash at Les Bains Douches, the former municipal bath that has been among Paris's most popular clubs for more than a decade. The party could have been in Saint-Tropez, New York, L.A., or East Hampton: the crowd, the food, the highly paid, artificially enhanced strippers disrobing on the bar, and the music. (In Paris, some of the women smoked Gauloises instead of Marlboro Lights.) Men wear gray, and women wear black. They all carry tiny digital cameras and minuscule dual-band cell phones.

The party began around midnight, but there were many stops to make first. Puffy's days in Paris started late—he tended to go to bed about 9 A.M. and sleep till early in the afternoon. If there was time, he would work out—he was travelling with a trainer, a stylist, and at least two personal assistants—before beginning to think about the evening's plans. (In New York, he sleeps about four hours a night, and makes only occasional visits to clubs.) This night, Anna Wintour was giving a party to celebrate the publication of a book by Grace Coddington, *Vogue's* longtime creative director. Afterward, there was to be a dinner at Karl Lagerfeld's eighteenth-century mansion. Oddly, though Puffy had been invited, he was a no-show. I met him and his friends around 11 P.M. at a restaurant down the street from the Plaza Athénée. Usually chatty and solicitous, he was sulking. Norma had somehow marooned him at a restaurant where there was no 1800 tequila. By the time I showed up, she was working two cell phones, trying to repair the damage. She called the Hyatt, but it had none; she struck out at the Ritz, too. It was nearly midnight, and Puff's party was about to begin. Bijou Phillips, who was making a film in Luxembourg with Madeleine Stowe and had arrived in Paris that day, tried to help. "How do you say 'eight' in French?" she asked. "If we could just tell him the number in French, maybe he would have it." Combs had also just been made aware that he had forgotten to attend the Anna Wintour party. "How the fuck could something like that happen?" he asked Norma, who offered no excuses. She put her head in her hands, then ordered roses to be sent to Wintour's hotel. Wintour has been among Combs's most vigorous supporters, and he was beside himself at the notion that he might have offended her. In the middle of dinner, he decided to go to the bar of the Plaza Athénée, down the street, and abruptly got up and left.

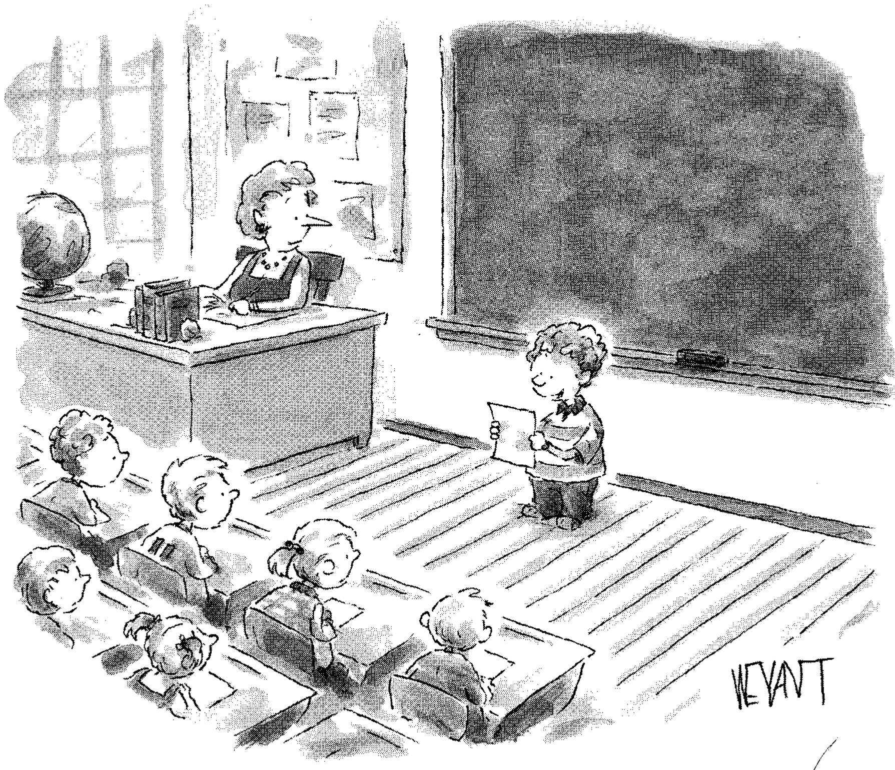
The bar was crowded with débutantes, models, actors, and rock stars, most of them transplanted from Manhattan. "I'm with Puffy," Paris Hilton said to her friend Cornelia Guest. You could feel the thrill pass between them. (I had asked Norma if Puffy was, in fact, friendly with the Hilton sisters or the Miller girls. "Not friendly, exactly," she replied. "But there are really only two types of rich people—the ones who go out, and the ones who don't. The Hiltons go out.") Suddenly, there was a brief confrontation at the bar. Naomi Campbell had just arrived, and she and

"What about accessories?"

Bijou Phillips were calling each other names. Phillips bumped into Campbell, and Campbell wheeled around and screamed, "I could knock you out, Bijou." The word "bitch" bounced back and forth like a Ping-Pong ball. There was some suggestion that Campbell, who is even more unpleasant than she is alluring, had hit on Phillips's fiancé, Sean Lennon, earlier in the summer. Combs, who has a gift for conciliation that has served him well as a producer, walked over, put his arm around Phillips, and gently pulled her away.

Black cars were lined up for blocks around Les Bains Douches by the time Puffy arrived. The party was so crowded that even people clutching invitations were having trouble getting in; the Hiltons (accompanied by their parents), the Miller sisters, Ivana Trump, Tom Ford, Mick Jagger, Eva Herzigova, Vin Diesel, and Bijou Phillips were all there. Jagger, sipping on a Heineken, looked rumpled. Combs's principal action was to issue whistles to most of the people in the house and to stand in a corner, stomp his feet, and clap along with the writhing dancers. He ordered five bottles of Cristal, four of Veuve Clicquot, two of Absolut, and two of 1800 tequila, with enough Coke to wash it down. He was dressed casually, in white linen without a jacket or tie. A diamond crucifix dangled from his neck. Tom Ford was having a drink at the bar when we entered. Puff started to walk over to him, then came back and grabbed me by the wrist and pulled me along. "You got to come with me for this, dawg," he said. As Combs approached, Ford held out his hand, but Puff Daddy got down on his knees and started an "I'm not worthy" wave at him. Ford laughed uncomfortably. "You are my god," Combs told him. "I worship you."

Hundreds of people had packed into the narrow old club. Puffy and his crowd had sequestered themselves in a cordoned-off area near the entrance. Everyone could see them, but only the chosen could approach. The group consisted of Puffy, Kim Porter, the rest of Puffy's visiting friends, Vin Diesel, the Hiltons, and Ivana Trump. Not long after 2 A.M., Puff handed a whistle to Ivana, and she spent much of the next hour blowing it. By that time, the Hilton girls were on a tabletop, dancing. So was their mother, Kathy. "I feel so bad for Paris," Bijou Phillips said as she watched Kathy Hilton wriggling. "Can you imagine how mortified she is watching her own mother acting like that?" The d.j. dedicated the Sheila E. song "The Glamorous Life" to Puff. "This is for P. Diddy," he said, using the most current version of his name. (During a particularly searching interview after Combs's trial last year, he announced that from now on he would be referred to not as Puff Daddy but as P. Diddy, which is what Biggie called him. He meant it partly as a joke. The next day, to his astonishment, the news was on the front page of the *Post.*) By 4:30 A.M., the party was winding down. Only the core group remained, dancing to Chaka Khan and some old Prince tunes. At about five, when it looked as though the evening might be over, Combs turned to me and said, "We are going to a strip club, and we are all going together." As soon as he finished speaking and climbed into his car, Norma turned to me and mouthed the words, "Totally off the record." Then we left.



"My summer vacation: How I made money in a bear market."

After breezing by two bouncers, we descended through a tunnel with video screens in the floor and walls. Hip-hop music played in the background. Puffy took a seat next to the catwalk where the girls "work." He insisted that I sit next to him. "Let's do an interview," he said. It was 5:15 A.M. and he finally felt relaxed enough to answer questions. Next to us, there was a spectacularly gifted woman at work. She had started off in a latex catwoman suit but was now wearing only an elaborate mask, a G-string, and a pair of stilettos. "Look at this woman," Puffy said. "Jesus. Do you think she's French?" (He wanted to tip her, but he rarely carries money. He waved for Norma, but she was across the noisy room.) I reminded him that Norma had decreed that the trip was off the record. "Nothing in my life is off the record," he said. "I wish it was, but it isn't. Never has been." I asked if he enjoys his celebrity. "Of course," he said. "I hate rich people who complain about how tough it is being rich. They are insane. I pay, like, fifty-per-cent taxes and I am very proud of that. I would happily pay more." I asked him if Sean John was as important to him as music, and if he got pleasure out of the clothes. "It's different from music. I don't mix the two. What I do mix is life style. I am making a life style, and it's part of entertainment. This just seems to be an obvious expression of who I am."

"Does the clothing line need to make

money for you to be satisfied with it?" I asked.

"Fuck, yes," he said, taken aback by the question. "I want people to know how serious we are and what we are capable of doing. And I want to be known as a businessman who made something better, made my people happy, and had some fun."

It was past dawn, nearly 6 A.M. "How did you feel about Jennifer Lopez leaving you the way she did?" I asked. Lopez had left him in the midst of the trial after the night-club shooting, when it seemed as if his musical empire, along with his self-made persona, were about to come crashing down. "Well, you know, I wish her the best in her life. I always have," he said. "But . . ." His voice trailed off. "Look, if she is happy, then I am happy for her." One of his friends had been listening. "Disloyal bitch," the friend said. "She's nothing but a disloyal bitch."

The following night, Puffy was invited to a small gathering at Karl Lagerfeld's mansion. Norma made sure he didn't forget this party. "Go," she told him. "Just get up and go." We were having a late dinner (with Puffy, there is no other kind) in the Buddha Bar, around the corner from the Hotel Crillon, and, as Combs and Porter were leaving, he decided to buy her some Buddha Bar souvenirs. (In recent months, Combs and Porter have spent considerable time together. When I asked him about it, he said, "I don't really know where it will go.") He dropped the souvenirs on the counter and spelled out the name "N-O-R-M-A" to the woman behind the register. Then he placed an international cell-phone call to Norma—who was finishing her dinner about a hundred feet away—and told her to pick up Porter's gifts when she was done. Puffy was in an expansive mood as his limousine sped through the nearly empty streets of Paris. "This city is so fly," he said. "Look at the clocks and the windows and the lights. And those little Smart cars. Even the buses are cool. Can you find a speck of dirt or any garbage on the ground? It's amazing. These people have the food, the clothes, the love. This city is just mad beautiful."

Lagerfeld's home is in the Sixth Arrondissement, a neighborhood inhabited mostly by rich businessmen and diplomats. His house looked as if it could have served as a pied-à-terre for the Sun King. Occupying twenty acres or so, the *hôtel particulier*—as the French call such immense city houses—had been lavishly restored over the previous decade to its pre-Revolutionary opulence. A petite woman, dressed in Chanel, opened the door onto a grand hallway where about a dozen people stood talking and smoking cigarettes. Butlers served champagne. The scene looked like a Ralph Lauren ad, down to the women in flowing dresses and chignons, and the sockless men in tuxedos. Pink buds—mainly freesias and roses—lined the hall and the main salon. The only thing missing was a golden retriever.

Lagerfeld was completing a late-night fashion shoot. Models whose clothes were too cumbersome to permit them to move unaided were led down a grand marble staircase by walkers, like Thoroughbreds being taken to the gate at the Kentucky Derby. The ball gowns were cut from sheets of silk, lace, and tulle. Several women wore masks. A chandelier draped in pink silk dominated the salon. One of the models, in a black hat that was five feet wide, required two men to guide her, one on each side of the hat. A samba band played briskly while Lagerfeld snapped pictures; every ten minutes or so, an assistant would transfer what he had recorded to a powerful computer in the next room. Puff and Kim looked on in amazement. Lagerfeld seemed pleased to have Puffy in his house—but wasn't quite sure what to do with him. "Let's take a tour," he said. And they proceeded to stroll upstairs, where the models were getting dressed. "Good evening, girls," Puffy said politely—before snapping some Polaroids of himself and Porter in the scene. "I hope we are not interrupting."

It isn't easy to get Puff Daddy to leave a party, but his friends were bored, and they weren't mixing with many of the other guests. Kim grabbed Puffy and dragged him toward the car. The Hiltons and the Millers and several of their friends needed a ride to the next stop—a birthday party at a club called Cantina. None of the women had a car, so they started to pile in with us, and there just wasn't room. "Wait," Puffy's stylist, a no-nonsense black woman, yelled. "Them bitches be heiresses. Blond Something von Furstenberg and Hiltons and shit. What are we now, a fucking limo service? They got to be getting their own damn cars."

Combs had many supporters at the Council of Fashion Designers of America award ceremonies—the fashion world's equivalent of the Oscars—this year. Anna Wintour told me that she was rooting for him, and so did the fashion editors of other magazines. The ceremony was held in the Celeste Bartos Forum of the New York Public Library. By 7 P.M., limousines had started to pull up to the covered runway on Fifth Avenue. Penélope Cruz accompanied Ralph Lauren; Lauren Hutton came next. Puffy was with his mother, Jeff Tweedy, and several members of the Sean John design team. He was the last nominee to arrive. He was dressed conservatively: a simple diamond earring in each ear, the canary-yellow pinky ring, and a subtly patterned black suit. His mother was more elaborately attired: she wore black stiletto slippers, diamond hoop earrings, and a variety of amulets. Her blond hair dangled over bare shoulders. They posed together on the red carpet. "Janice, are you proud of your boy?" a television reporter asked. "Yes, I am always proud of Sean," she replied.

By the time they swept into the front hall, it was almost empty. Puff strolled through, working his two-way pager and occasionally taking a phone call. Ralph Lauren came out to say hello and Calvin Klein wandered over to tell Janice how lovely she looked. I asked Puffy if he was nervous. We were standing beneath blowups of Jackie Kennedy, Oleg Cassini, and Audrey Hepburn. "No," he replied. "Why be nervous about what you can't control?"

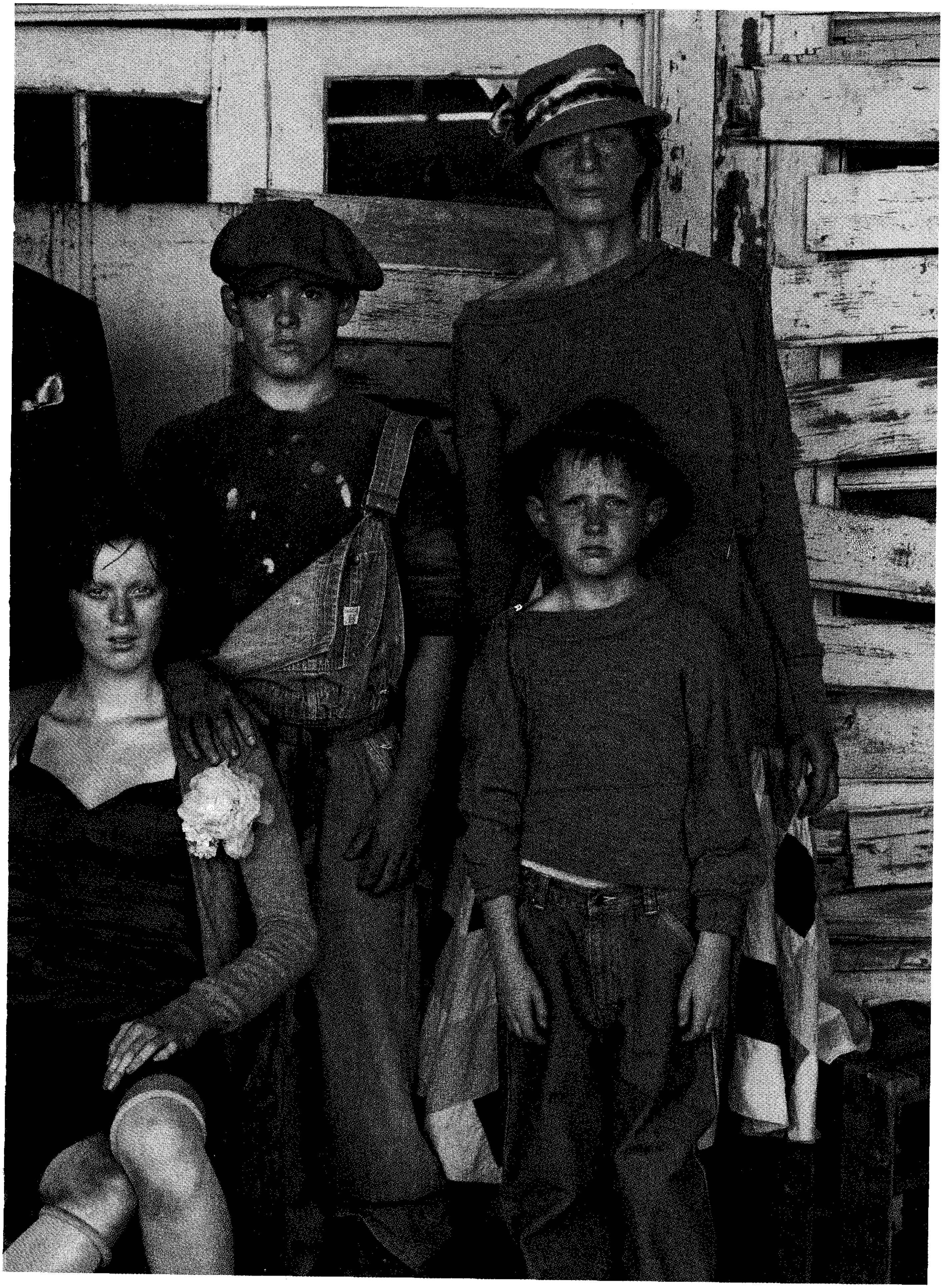
It wasn't until after 11 P.M. that Alan Rickman presented the award for men's fashion. Puffy stopped sending e-mail and making phone calls. After a brief video display of each man's work, Rickman announced that the award would go to Marc Jacobs. Puffy applauded loudly, smiled at everyone, and then picked up his phone. Tweedy sighed. When we got up to leave, I asked Combs how he felt about losing. He shrugged. "Hey, I didn't lose," he said. "I was nominated. I am just getting started." ♦

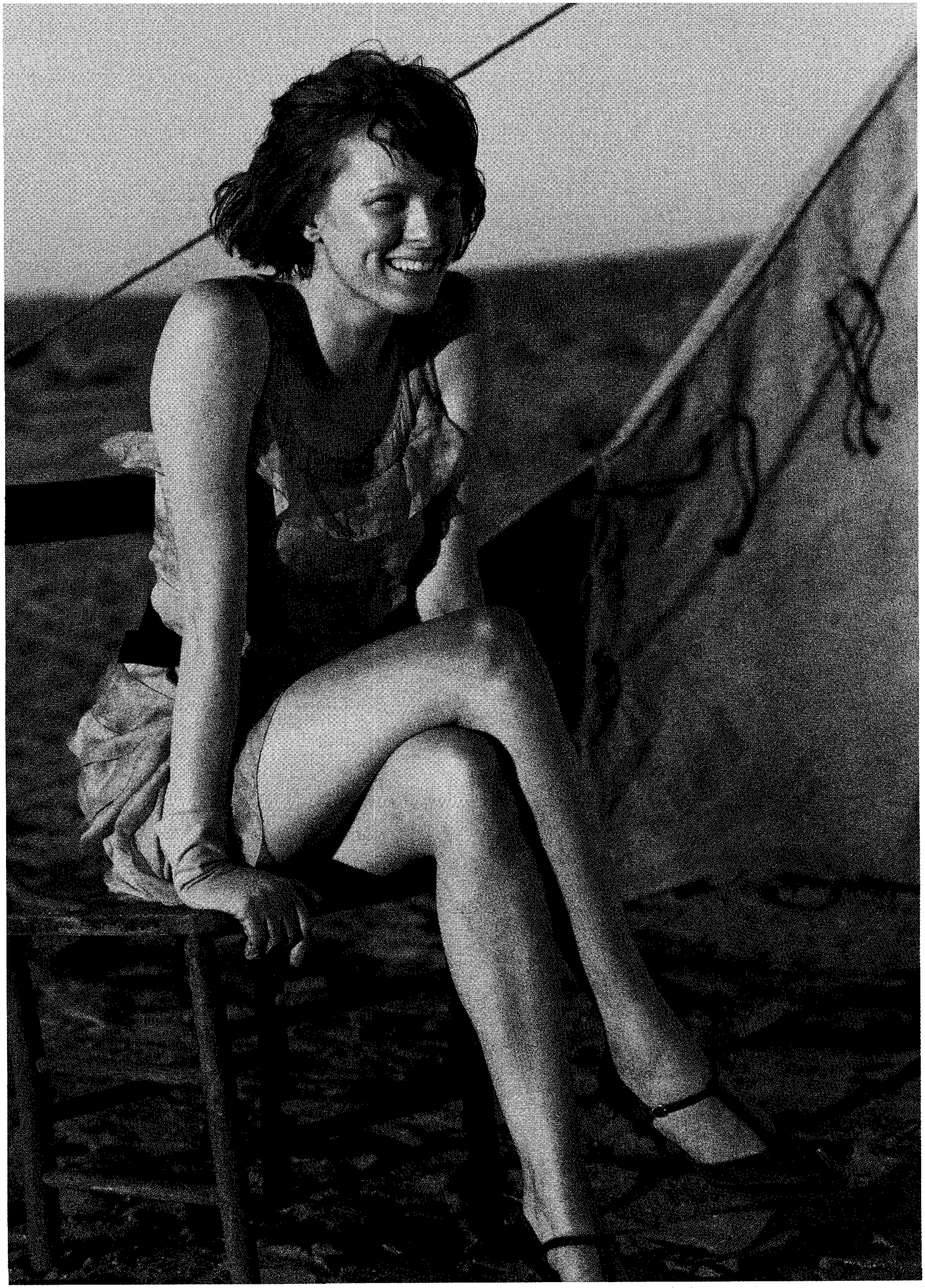
PORTFOLIO BY HERB RITTS • STYLED BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

GOING WEST

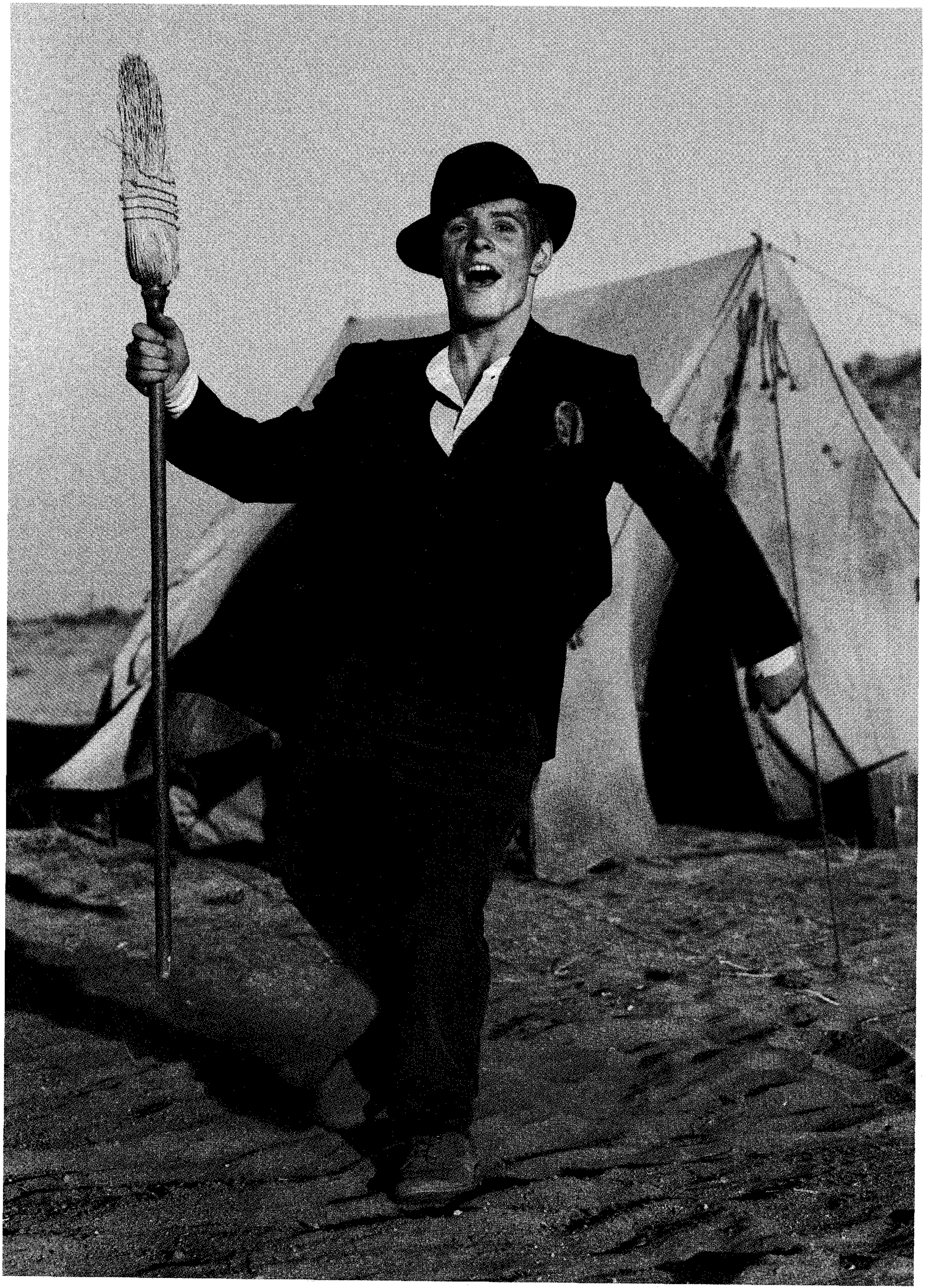
Fashion has been looking over its shoulder again, and this season the collective gaze has landed on the nineteen-thirties, among other escapist moments. Designers have drawn on both the glitter and the squalor of the age—satin shoes and dusty dungarees, gimlets and dry rot—and the result is something like dust-bowl glamour. It's as if one of John Steinbeck's migrants had wandered into the world of Nathanael West's New California.

Hard times on the hardpan. Right: crushed-silk slip dress and cardigan by Louis Vuitton; big brother's boiled sweater, with holes, by Junya Watanabe; Ma's and little brother's sweaters by Balenciaga; Ma's skirt by Marni; Pa's jacket by Sean John, and undershirt by Dolce & Gabbana. Above: beaded gown by Ralph Lauren.

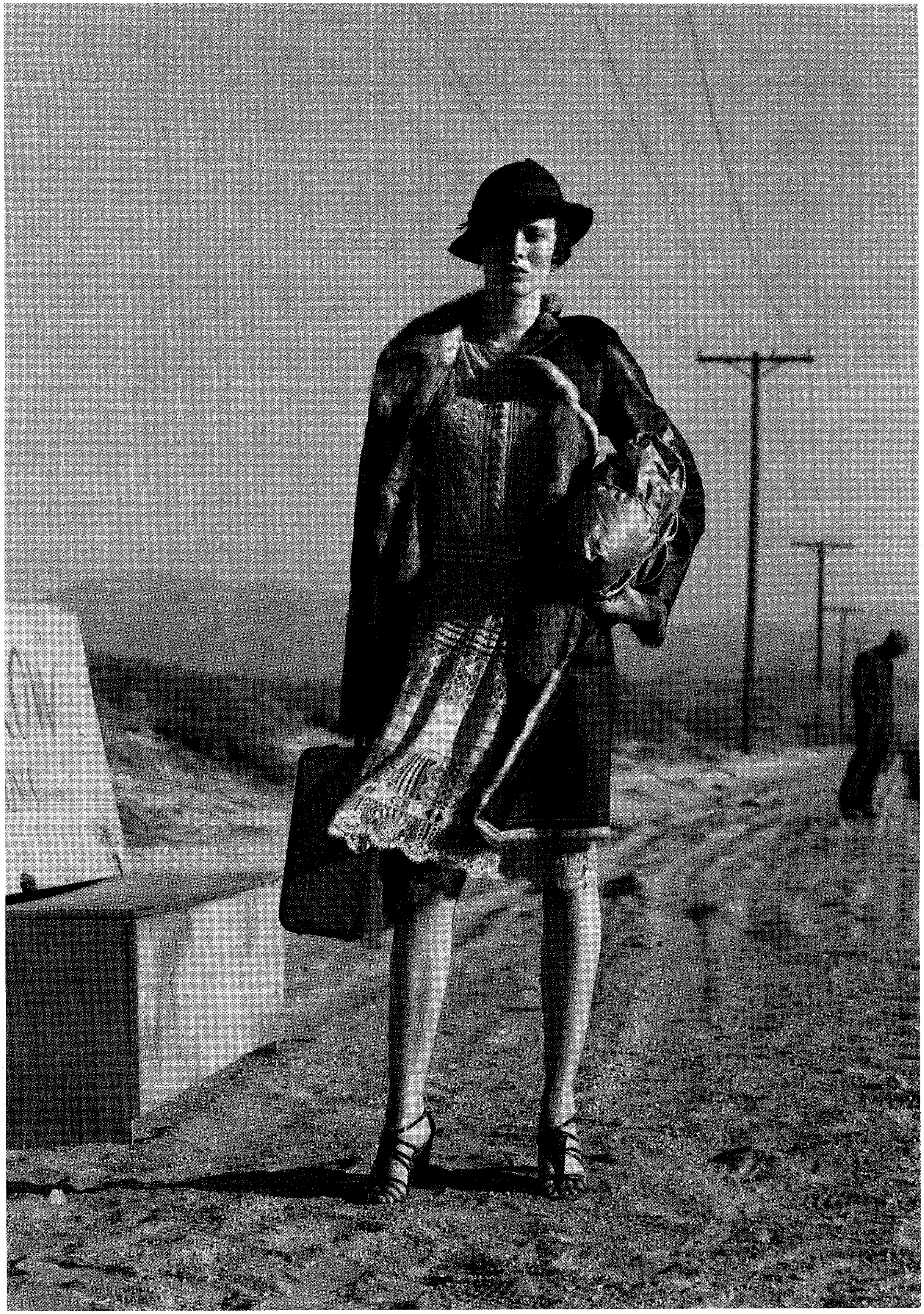


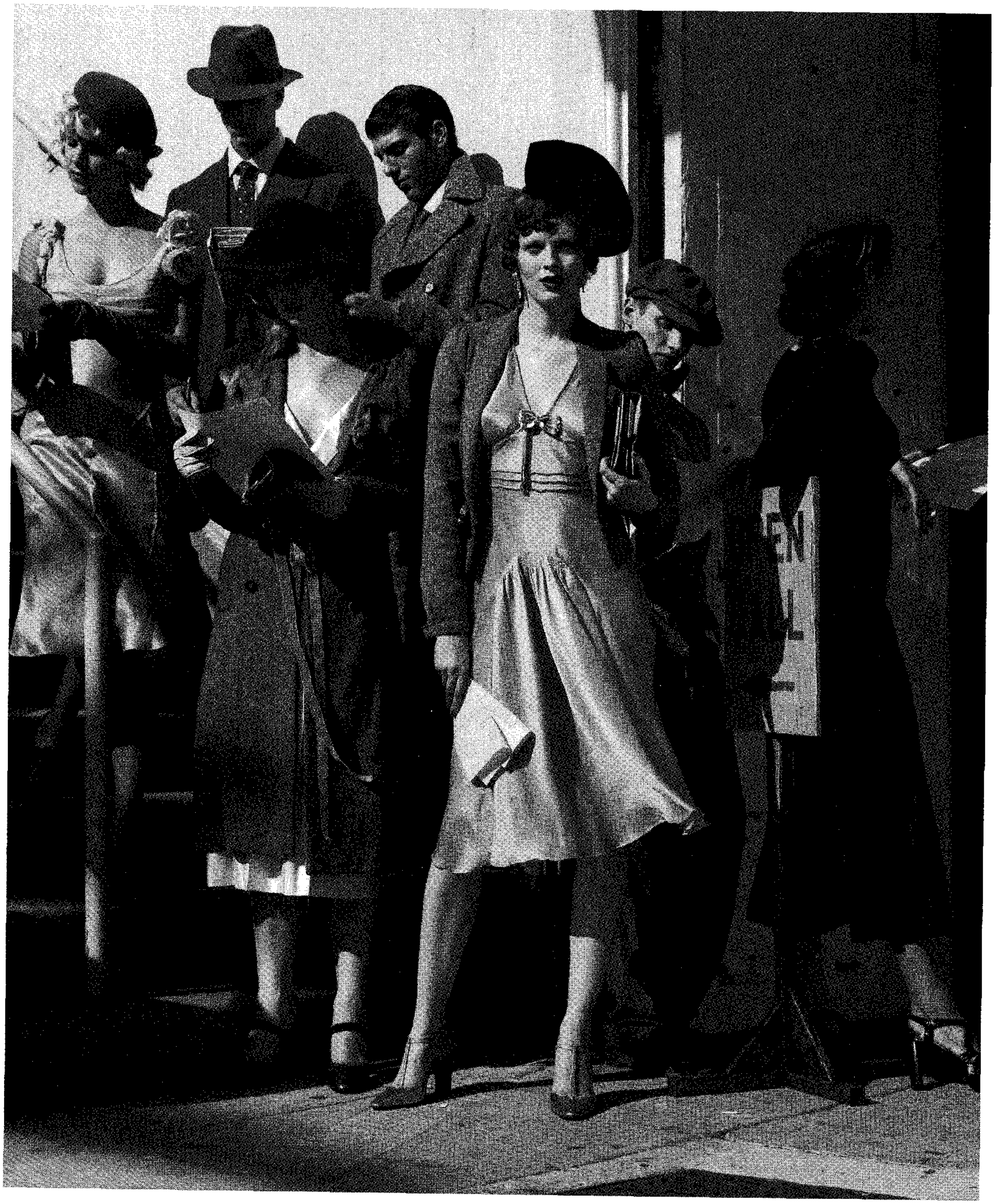


Frilled silk dress by Chanel; T-strap shoes by Mario Valentino; and kid gloves by Roeckl Gloves for La Crasia.

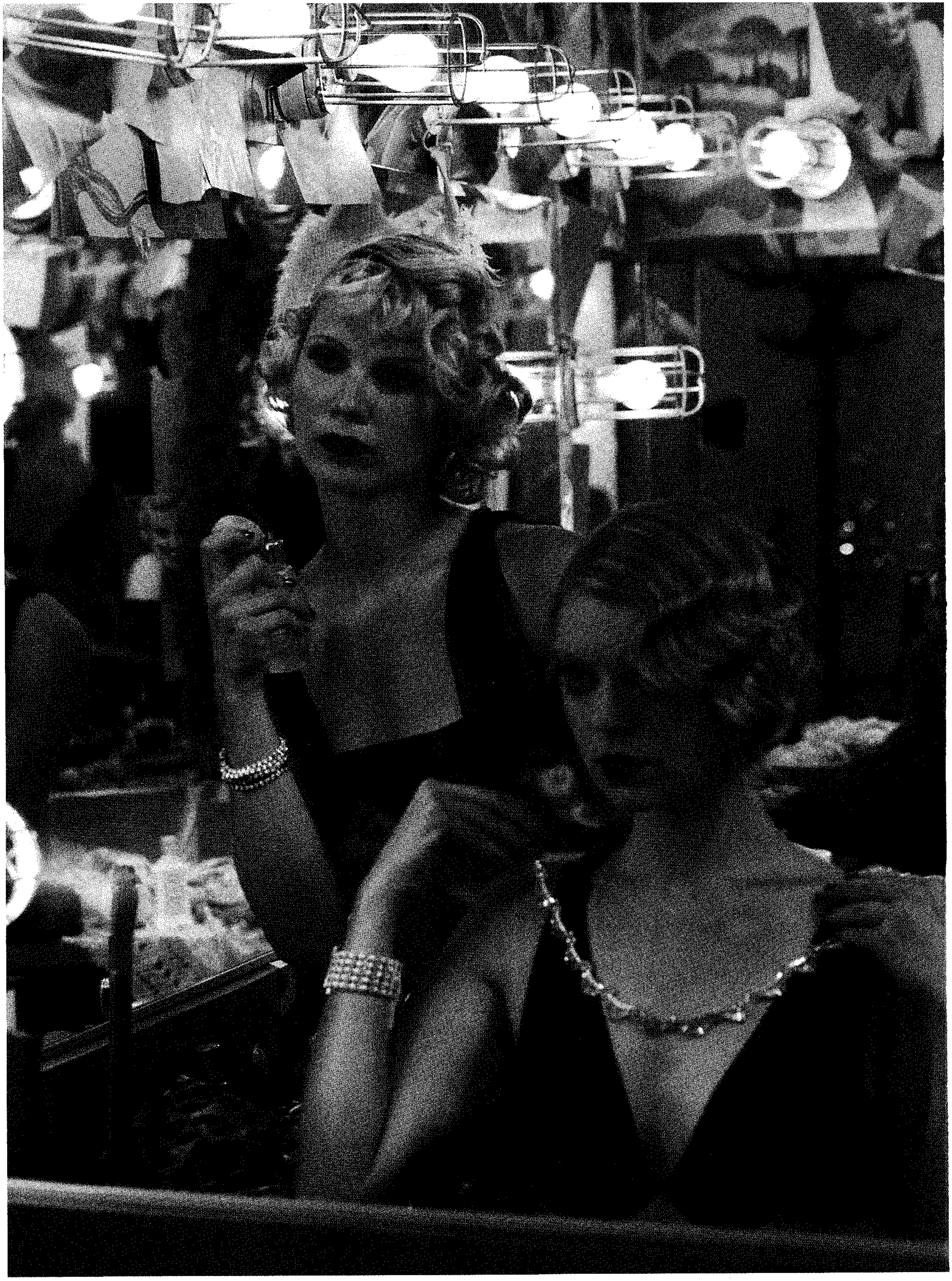


The actor Billy Kay wears a suit vest and jacket and corduroy trousers by Dolce & Gabbana and a fedora by Philip Treacy.

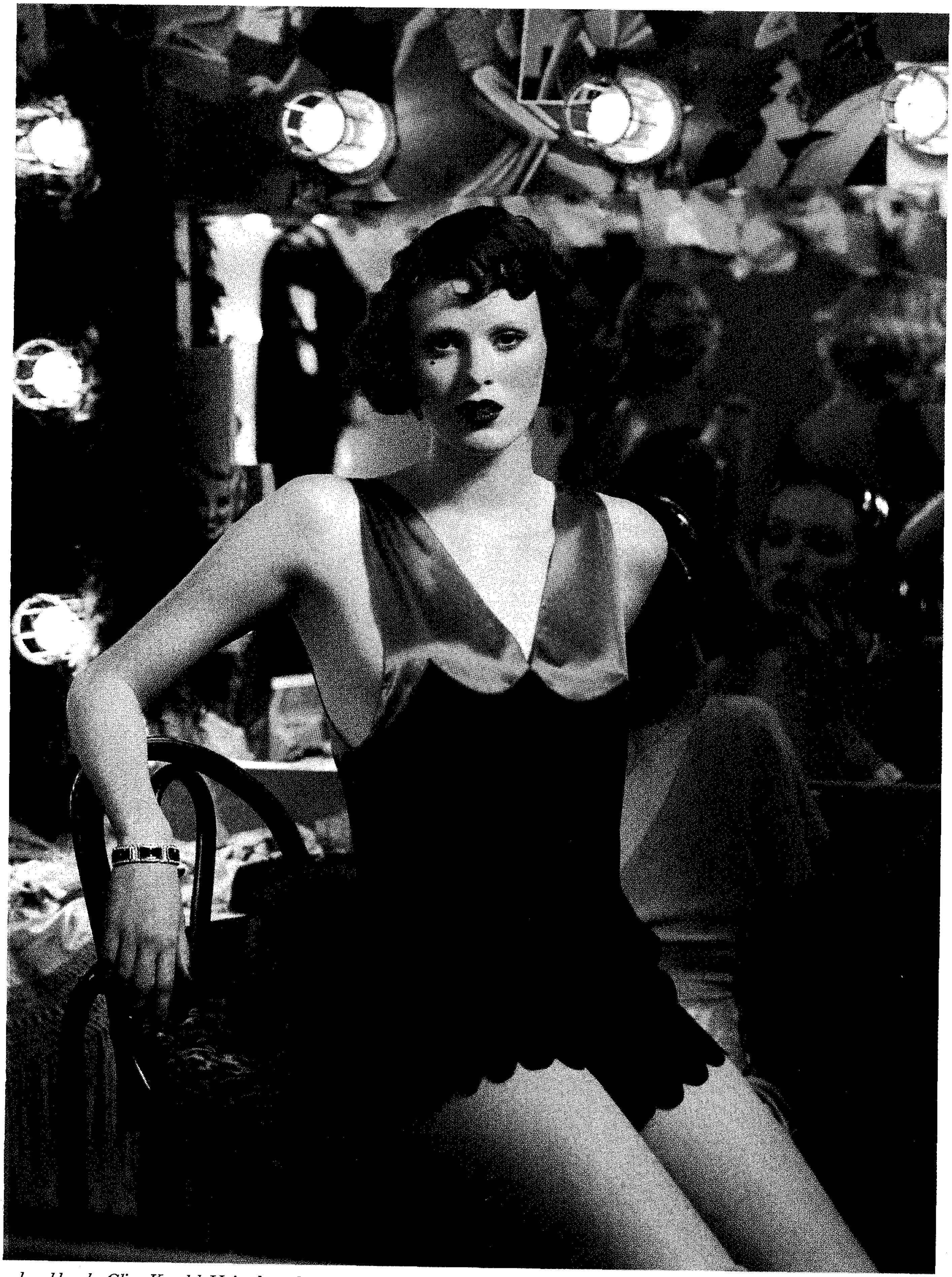




Left: dress and coat by DKNY; shoes by Emporio Armani; vintage suitcase by Early Halloween. Above: dress and coat by Moschino; shoes by Bottega Veneta; and hat by Stephen Jones. Female extras (left to right) wear Moschino, Jil Sander (with Marni coat), and Donna Karan. Menswear by Sean John and Dolce & Gabbana.

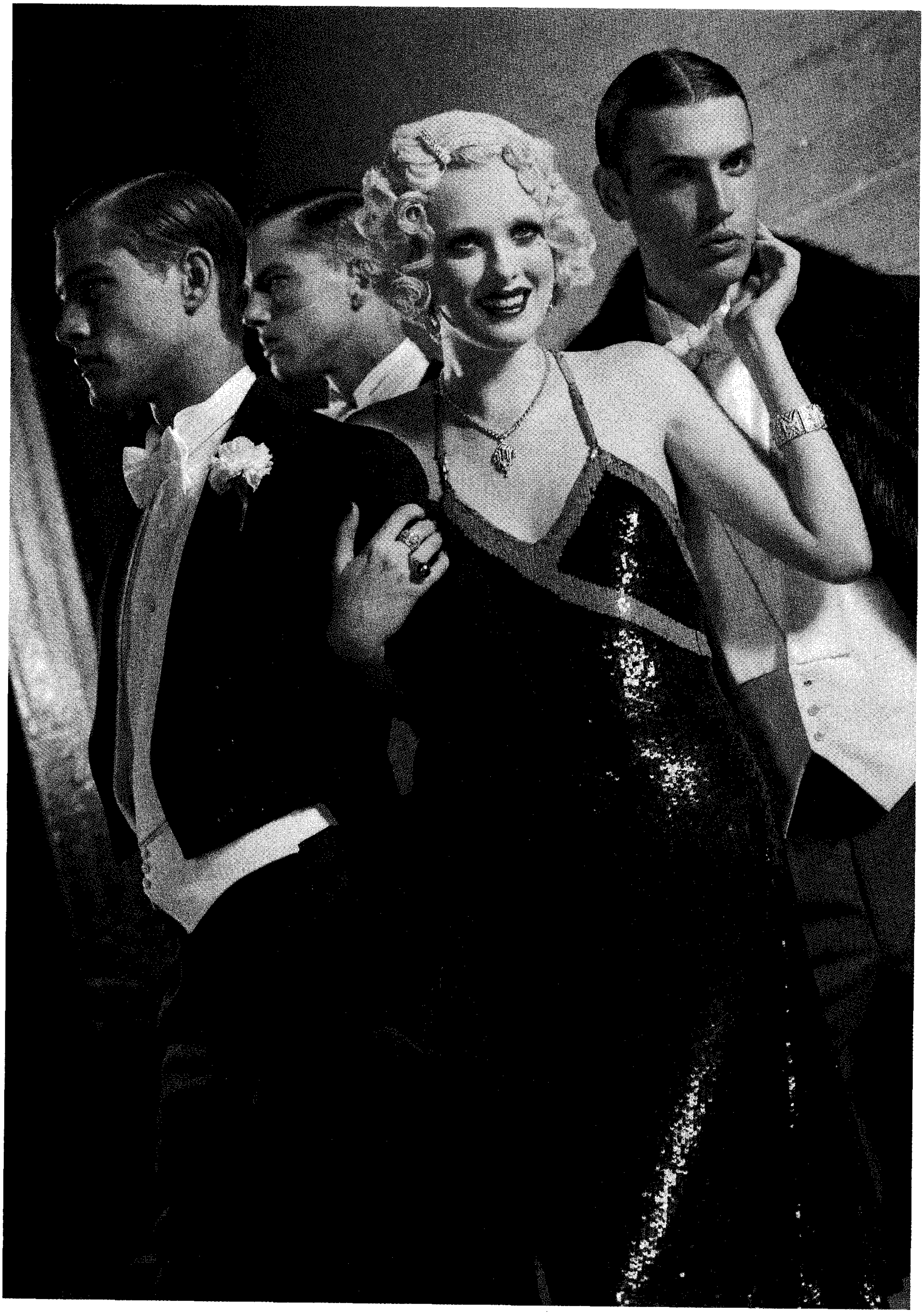


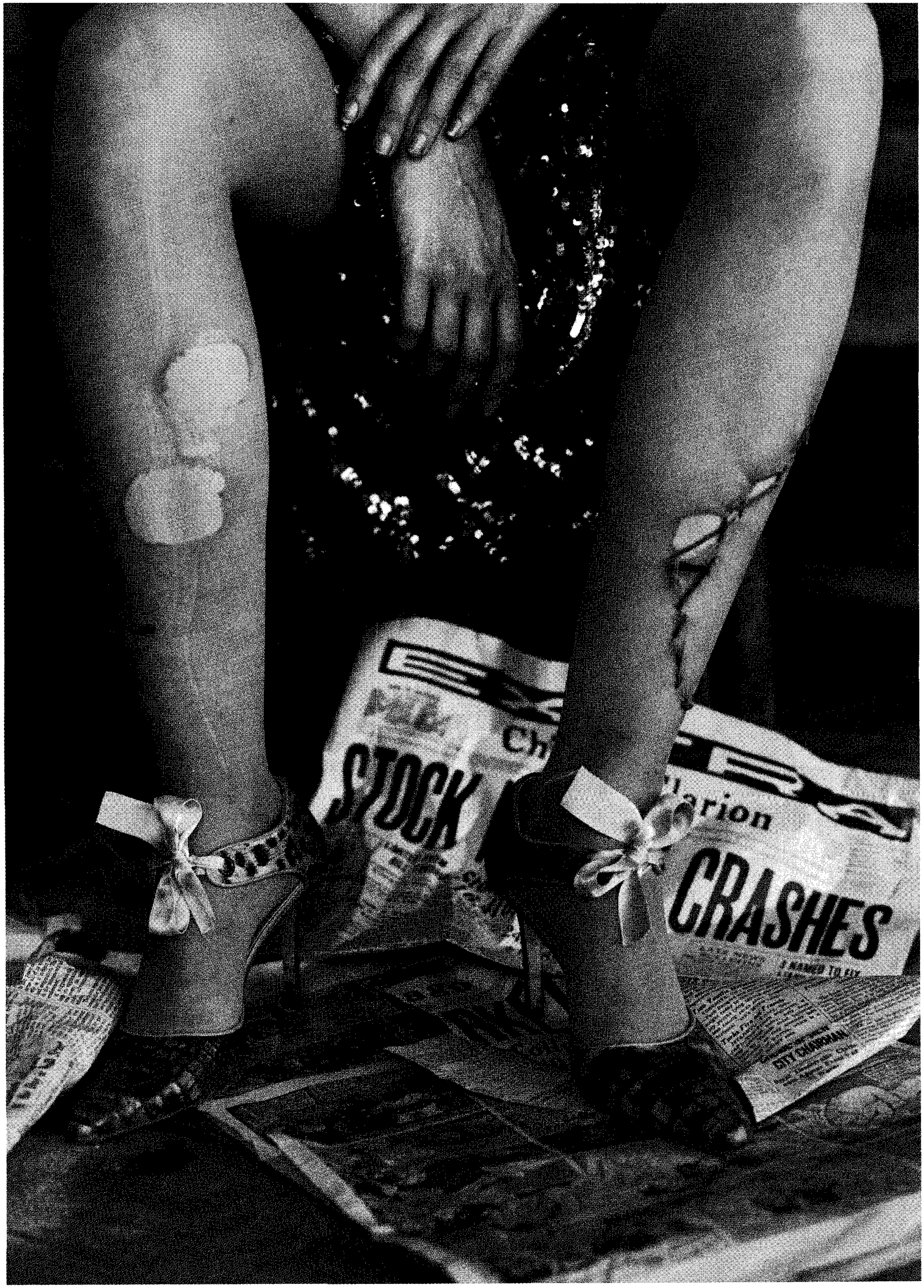
Slipper-satin teddies and shifts—just the right thing for a chorus girl—by Prada; hosiery by Wolford; vintage-style bracele



nd necklace by Clive Kandel. Hair, throughout, by Peter Savic for Art Mix/Redken; makeup by Paul Starr, at Magnet L.A.

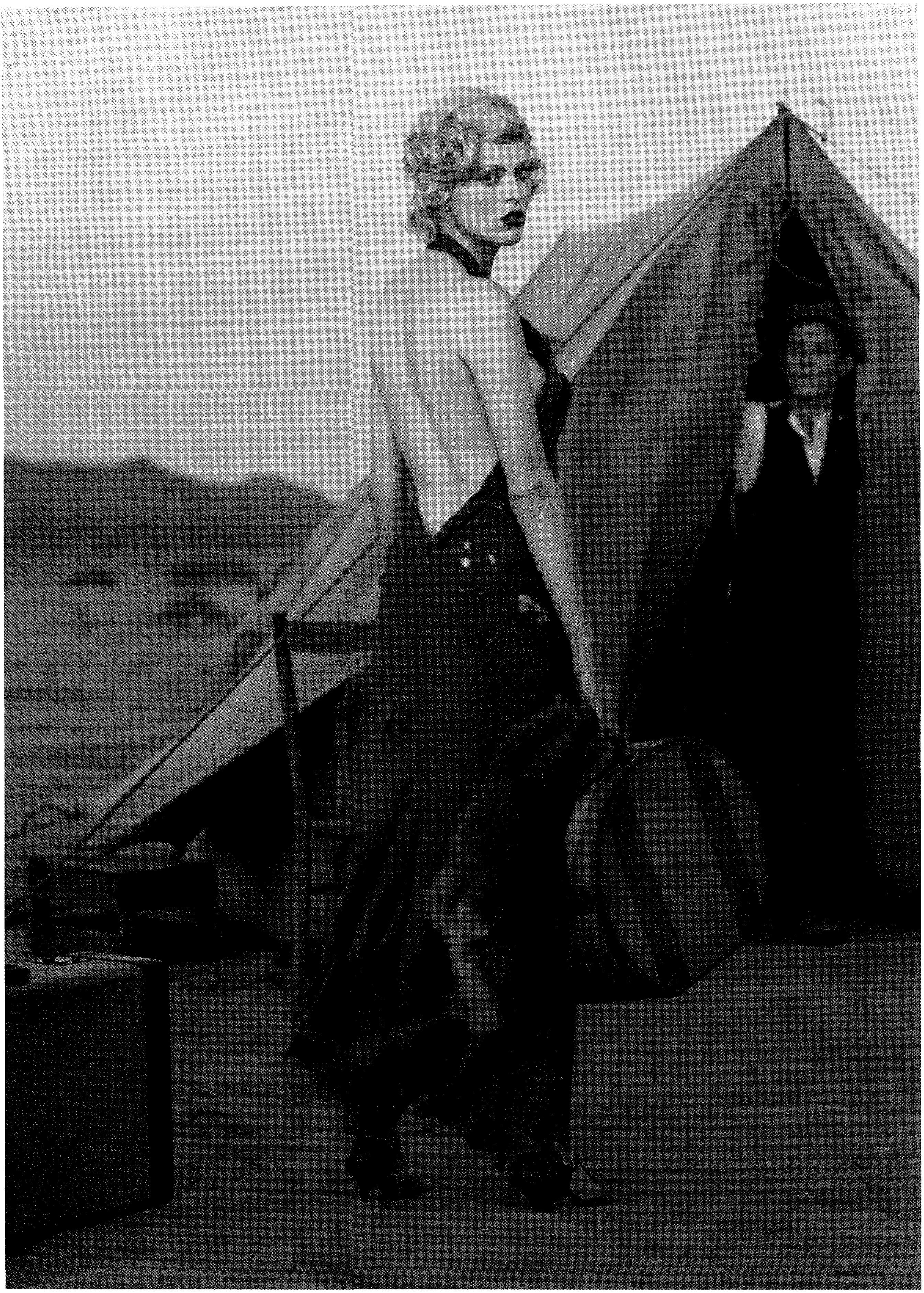
Above: nylon flight jacket, silk scarf, and silk blouse by Celine; gloves by La Crasia. Right: sequinned gown by Emporio Armani; white tie and tails, tuxedos, and man's evening coat with beaver lining by Gucci.




Clarion
STOCK
CRASHES
CITY CHAIRMAN

Dress of sequin-covered tulle by Marc Jacobs; tights by Fogal; crocodile-and-leopard-print ponyskin pumps by Manolo Blahnik.

STYLE COÖRDINATOR: TERESA LOGAN

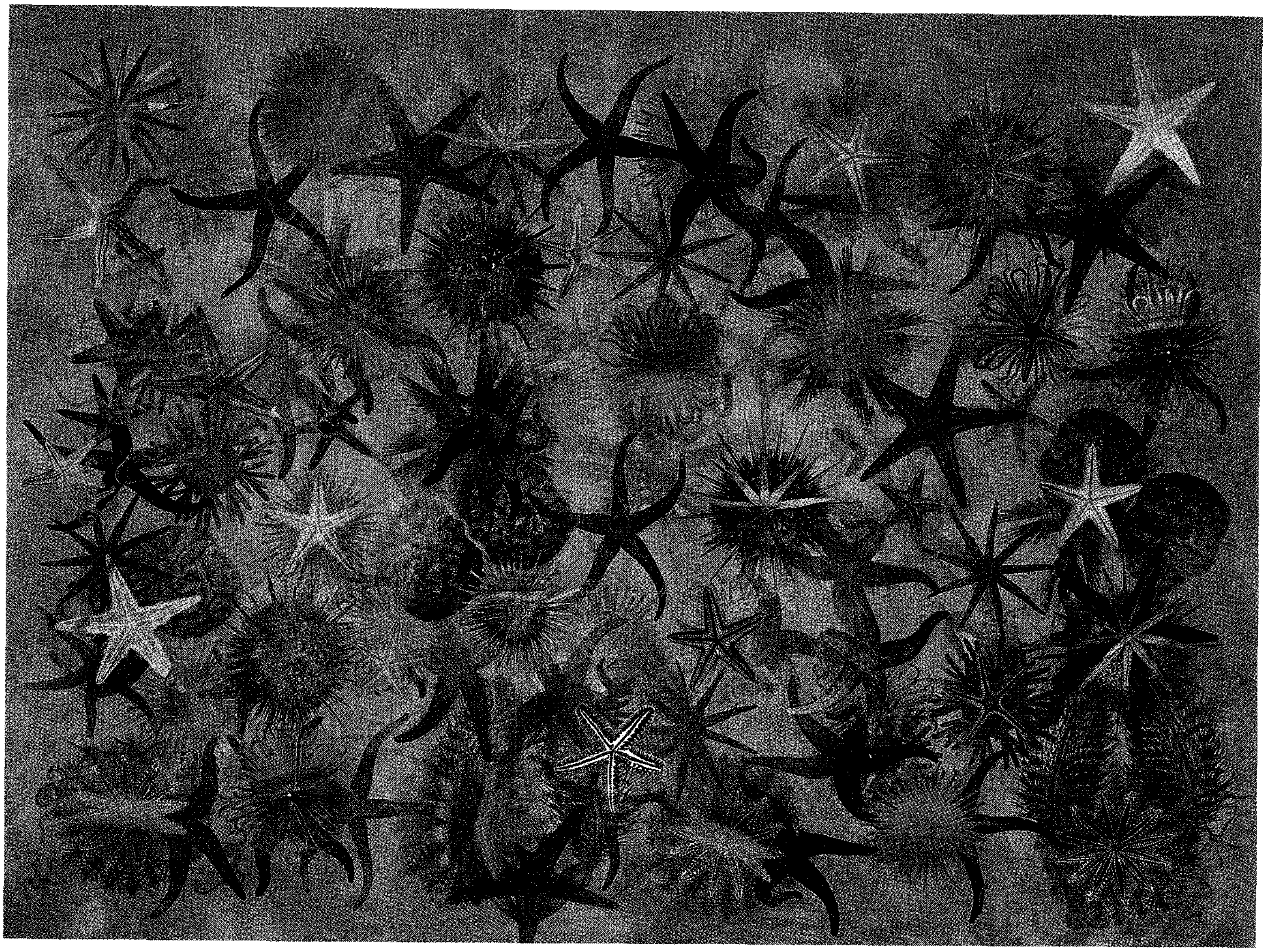


Plunge-back evening gown, with holes, by Junya Watanabe; shoes by Mario Valentino. Man's clothes by Dolce & Gabbana.

FICTION

THE OCEAN

BY FREDERICK REIKEN



Early that summer, Dara and I were sitting on the rocky, volcanic tip of Yawzi Point. We were spying on Dara's mother, who was diving with a graduate student, Charles, on the reef a hundred feet below us. Charles was on St. John doing his own research, on gorgonian sea fans, but he sometimes helped professors gather data. Dara thought Charles and her mother might be having an affair.

Dara asked me whether my father ever dated his students. "Sometimes," I said. "Although that was before he met Beverly."

"Were they voluptuous?" Dara asked.

I said one was.

"My mother says that men like younger women to be voluptuous, but younger men like older women to be skinny and athletic."

"I never heard that," I said, just as the sky rumbled with thunder. The rain came in over the bay, changing the color of the water from turquoise to dark blue. Dara yelled, "Mangoes!" and we ran to the grove.

As the rain fell we waited by a mango tree. Picking the mangoes was forbidden because everything in that part of St. John was national parkland. Nothing could be disturbed. That meant the mangoes, iguanas, conches, and all the coral on the reef. But we found ways around the rules—such as rainstorms that knocked mangoes from the mango trees. I glanced at Dara. She smiled mischievously. "Whoops," Dara said, and hit a tree limb with her shoulder. "Oops," I said, and shook another limb. We used our dripping-wet shirts as pouches to hold the mangoes and quickly took them to Dara's bungalow.

I was thirteen. Dara was fourteen. She was from Utah and knew how to get moray eels to eat out of her hand. Her mother was doing research on the territoriality of damselfish. She was tenured at a university in Salt Lake City. Like my father, she was teaching marine

PHILIP TAAFFE, "ASTERIAS" (1997)/PETER BLUM, N.Y.

biology at the School for Field Studies that summer.

Dara had blond hair that the Caribbean sun turned white. I loved the way her face looked underwater. Her eyes would seem very expressive, but with her mouth around her regulator she smiled in a way that my father said was "languid." I also liked the way she would point to barracudas and then nervously give me the O.K. sign. Dara was constantly giving me the O.K. sign underwater.

Once, we buddy-breathed at fifty feet, and that night Dara said she'd felt like we were kissing underwater. On another dive we landed on a stingray. When our fins touched on the seafloor, the sand moved and we both kicked up as a giant stingray flapped away. Dara turned quickly and gave me the O.K. sign. I took my slate, wrote, "Holy fuck!" and held it before her eyes. She smiled and wrote, "Holy fucking fuck!" on her slate. I was about to write, "Holy fucking fucking fuck" when Dara swam up close and pressed her mask to mine. For a few seconds we stared with our eyes an inch apart. Then she pulled her head back and gave me the O.K. sign. On her slate she wrote, "I wanted to see the color of your eyes."

From Dara's bungalow that night we could hear soldier crabs in the forest—a loud *whooshing* that sounded more like wind than like crabs. Dara's mother was sitting on her bed with Charles, playing gin rummy and eating the stolen mangoes. Charles was talking about himself, as usual, going on about the English countryside, where he lived. He took out a cigarette and lit it, maybe because he knew the smell of smoke would make us leave.

Outside we caught two soldier crabs, which was easy, though it went against park rules. We took the crabs to my father's and my bungalow, but my father was there, sitting at his small desk with a pile of slates. "Professor Kahn, what are you doing?" Dara asked him. He told Dara he was grading the underwater-identification quiz he'd given to his students that afternoon. He said that no one had identified the tunicate *Ascidia nigra,* which is a black piece of slime that lives on rocks. My father often pointed it out while we were snorkeling. He liked informing people that *Ascidia nigra* was, evolutionarily, our closest relative on the reef.

My father's hair had grown back after he'd been bald for three months, from chemotherapy. Now he was in remission from his leukemia. He'd grown a beard for the first time, and it made him look like Grizzly Adams. He said, "Ten points if you can tell me the taxonomic classification for those hermit crabs?" Dara guessed *Uca*, which was wrong. That was the fiddler crab. I said, "It's *Coenobita clypeatus*." He said, "Ten points! Now please go set Mr. and Mrs. Clypeatus free."

We took the crabs back to the woods behind Dara's bungalow, where Dara's mother and Charles were still playing gin rummy. Charles's nasally British accent made me think of "Monty Python's Flying Circus." "It's my mist-aaaake!" I sang to Dara, who stared back blankly. "It's Monty Python," I said. "One of their gag lines."

We took turns lying down and letting Mr. and Mrs. Clypeatus walk around on our backs and stomachs. This got us both all sandy, so we decided to go swimming in the bay called Little Lameshur. It's pronounced La-muh-shoor and we sometimes joked about this name. I said, "You sure?" and Dara answered, "Lameshur."

At the beach we took our shirts off. I wondered whether Dara would take her bra off. I wondered why she wore a bra at all. We heard hooves clomping and turned in time to see a herd of feral donkeys. In the moonlight they seemed like phantom creatures. They trotted into the eucalyptus forest behind the road.

I told Dara that my father thought the donkeys could be studied by a biologist who was interested in equid sociality. They had harems, my father said, which meant that males had groups of females that they fought for or guarded territory for. That was what some Ph.D. candidate would have to figure out.

Dara said, "Hey, you know, there's an opening at the college where my mother works. My mom's on the search committee. Maybe your father could apply."

"What's the course load?" This was a question that my father would have asked.

"I don't know," Dara said. "All I know is that they've been searching since last fall."

"He might apply," I said, "although he likes his job at Rutgers. He'd also have to make sure that he was better."

"Better than who?" she asked.

I hadn't told her yet about my father's illness.

I said, "Just better. He had leukemia last winter."

She pressed her balled up shirt against her chin and seemed embarrassed.

"He doesn't seem sick," she said.

"Right now he's not. He was treated with chemotherapy."

Dara said, "Oh," and stopped talking about the job opening in Utah. That always happened when I mentioned my father's illness. People stopped talking.

I said, "He's been in remission since February."

Dara nodded.

I said, "People don't always die from it."

Dara said, "Oh."

"Should we go swimming?"

She dropped her shirt in the sand and took her bra off. I'd been thinking that I wanted to kiss her, but I could tell she was still thinking about my father.

It was low tide, and Little Lameshur had a sandbar. We had to walk before we got to water that was deep enough to swim in. I took her hand. "I found a sand dollar here," she said, "but it disintegrated."

I said, "That always happens with sand dollars." I considered this our first official conversation while holding hands.

When we got to chest-high water we dived in. After we swam around I got up the nerve to ask Dara if I could kiss her. She said yes, so I slid my arms around her waist. "Are you O.K.?" she asked, because I'd started shivering. "A little cold," I said, and kissed her. Her lips tasted like salt water. "Do that again," Dara said. We continued kissing for a while and then just hugged as we stood there in the ocean. I noticed other things—a rising half moon and stars reflected on the blue-black surface of the water. There were no boats, no islands, no light except the moon. I was afraid for a few seconds, and then I wasn't. When we were back on the beach we kissed again, and I wondered what I had been scared of.

On July 4th, my father took me snorkeling in the mangroves, which smell disgusting—like very rotten eggs. But the mangrove swamp functions like a nursery. It's where all sorts of juvenile creatures live before they're big enough to survive out on the reef. My father said he had seen lemon sharks and nurse sharks the size of a lobster. He had seen lobsters that were only slightly bigger than his thumb. While we were walking there, I told him about the job opening in Utah. I said I didn't know the course load but Dara's mom could probably pull strings for him. I said that Utah might be nicer than Piscataway, where we lived, that there'd be ski mountains nearby and maybe lots of beautiful blond people like Dara and her mother. My father said he had no plans to change jobs right now and certainly no plans ever to live in Utah.

"What's wrong with Utah?" I asked.

He seemed flustered and said, "Nothing's wrong with Utah. Except it's far away and right now it's the last . . ."

He put both hands on his head, the way football coaches do when their kicker misses an easy field goal.

"It's the last what?"

"The last thing I have time to think about," he said.

"Why?"

He took his hands down and said, "Jordan, we need to talk about some things. Let's take our snorkel and then we'll have a conversation."

Once we were actually swimming in the mangroves, I stopped noticing the sulfury rotten-egg smell. Swimming was tricky because the roots made an underwater maze. They were encrusted with algae, sponges, anemones, and barnacles. Schools of young reef fish swam around them. We also saw some tiny crabs and lobsters, but no sharks. Each time I picked up my head and looked around, I was reminded that we were swimming under a forest. Above the water the mangrove roots made giant chairlike shapes that you could sit on. After we'd snorkeled for a while we climbed up onto one to have our conversation.

He began by mentioning that a few months ago he wasn't even sure if he'd be well enough to teach a class this summer. Did I understand that his health was still a thing he had to be concerned about? I said I did. He started talking about Beverly, his girlfriend. She'd be arriving in St. John in three weeks. He said he wanted to discuss something hypothetical. "About Beverly?" I asked, and he said yes, it had to do with Beverly. Then he asked whether, in the event that his illness recurred and he was not able to get better, it would be O.K. if Beverly adopted me.

"If you were dead, you mean?" I asked.

"That's what I mean."

He'd been with Beverly three years, ever since we moved from Rhode Island to New Jersey. She was a divorced pediatrician with two daughters. I'd been to her house in East Brunswick a few times and liked Rocky, her younger daughter, who was in the same grade as me. Her older daughter, Jennifer, always seemed angry and I hadn't ever talked to her. But she had seashells all over her bedroom, which made me think there was a chance I'd like her, too.

I said, "I guess it would be fine."

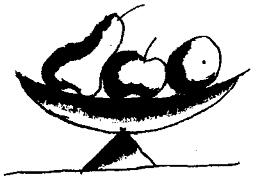
"I'm glad to hear that," he said. "Beverly loves you."

We had our masks on our heads and our fins rested against the long roots of the mangrove. My father's beard was all wet. It had a gray patch that reminded me of coral. His wavy, sun-bleached hair was bunched up above his mask.

"I'd like to tell you something about your mother," he said.

"O.K.," I said. My mother died when I was six, when she was driving home from a supermarket in Providence. She was hit by someone going the wrong way on the highway's off ramp. Whenever Dad talked about Mom, it made me anxious.

He said, "I once brought her down here for the summer. That was in 1964, when I was studying long-spined urchins for my doctorate."



I said, "They're black. *Diadema antillarum*."

He said, "That's right."

"I saw some in Little Lameshur."

"They're everywhere," he said. "But I'm not talking about sea urchins."

"So what do you want to tell me?"

He said, "Your mother and I, we once sat right here in these mangroves."

"This exact tree?"

"Maybe."

"It would be neat if it was actually this tree."

"It might have been." He looked at me. "Your mother and I were young and very happy. We were just sitting in these mangroves."

I said, "O.K.," and nodded, trying to act like I was getting what he was saying. Then I said, "Dad, do you think you will die?"

He said, "It's possible."

"But you said people survive leukemia."

"Some people do," he said. "More often, it comes back."

"You don't seem sick anymore," I said. "Not like when you were doing chemotherapy."

He said, "Jordan, do you remember why I brought you with me to St. John?"

"Because you thought it might be your last summer?"

He said, "That's right."

The breeze picked up and the surface of the swamp rippled. A lone pelican swam in through the entrance to the mangroves, and in a low voice my father said, "The ocean." He and I sometimes said this to each other. It was a code, although we'd never really said what it was code for. I nodded and watched the pelican. For a short while we sat in silence. Then we jumped back into the smelly water.

On a moonless night, Dara and I walked out to Yawzi Point. A hundred years before, there had been a leper colony here, and the donkeys always seemed to hang around the unmarked graveyard. As we walked past the spot, we saw them grazing, but even though we were talking loudly they didn't run.

Charles the intern had gone back to England for someone's wedding. He wasn't returning to St. John until

"Would you mind talking to me for a while? I forgot my cell phone."

September, and Dara thought that we should celebrate never having to see his weaselly face again. She had brought a bottle of Cruzan rum, which she'd stolen from Matt Daniels, a student in her mother's reef-ecology class. Matt had twelve bottles, which he'd bought when a group went into Cruz Bay for July 4th. He'd stashed them out in the woods behind his bungalow. I worried about stealing, but Dara said it would be fine—we could always blackmail him. Students could be sent home if they got caught with liquor.

We passed the bottle back and forth, and after three or four gulps I felt like I was floating. Dara took another sip and started gagging. I thought she was going to throw up.

When she stopped gagging, she said, "I'm drunk, Jordan. Are you?"

I said, "I think so."

"Close your eyes," she said. "You'll know."

I closed my eyes and the world was spinning. I said, "I'm definitely drunk."

Dara said, "Thought so. You're a lightweight." She pulled my shirt up. I kept my eyes closed and everything stayed spinning. She started kissing me on my chest. Her touch felt cold with all the wind. She started licking me and then she bit me. I said, "Stop."

"Stop what?" she said.

"Stop biting me."

Dara said, "Why? You taste so good."

I said, "I don't really like when people bite me."

She laughed and said, "You're strange."

After that she kissed me without biting me. I closed my eyes again. The world still spun and I felt like I could spin to anything I wanted.

Later, in the bungalow, I woke up yelling after a nightmare about lepers. In the nightmare my mother had turned into a leper. My father woke, and I told him I had been dreaming about Mom.

He grabbed the windup clock beside his bed and held it to his eyes. "It's almost two," he said. "How do you feel about going down to Big Lameshur for a night dive? We could be back here by four and sleep for a few more hours."

My father had never taken me on a night dive. I asked him if we could use Cyalume sticks. They have a liquid inside that glows fluorescent green after you hit them. He said we'd wear them on our weight belts.

We only went down thirty feet, but even at that depth we saw things that you usually can't see during the day. A spotted moray was crawling along the bottom. A queen angelfish seemed to be resting in the space beneath a head of brain coral. Its eyes were open but it wasn't moving. It was as if it was just sitting in the water. Then, as we swam around the head of coral, I saw a shark-shaped shadow lying on the seafloor. My father shined his underwater light on it. A nurse shark. Full grown. It was yellowish brown, with spots. It had two dorsal fins and barbels hanging from its nostrils, like a catfish. I knew that nurse sharks weren't aggressive, but I was panicking and I pointed to the surface. My father gave me the O.K. sign, took my arm, and we started our ascent.

One of the "Seven Rules of Diving" was "Go up slowly." "Stop, think, then act" was another—though I definitely didn't think before I acted. When we broke through the water's surface, I began kicking madly with my flippers. I didn't stop until I reached the shallow water by the dock. When Dad caught up, I was crouching in the water.

"It was a nurse shark," he said. "They aren't dangerous."

I said, "I know."

He said, "Then what were you afraid of?"

"It was so big."

He said, "You swam with manatees in Florida. They're much bigger."

I told him, "Manatees aren't sharks."

He crouched next to me. A damselfish was nipping at my ankle. My father liked to tell his students that the damselfish were by far the most aggressive fish on the reef.

He said, "You know, I've swum with mako sharks and tiger sharks in Australia. I once swam right through fifty or more blue sharks that had gathered near a sandbar in Bermuda. Even the great white shark I saw in the South Seas left me alone."

"Weren't you ever scared?" I asked.

He shook his head and said, "Whenever I'm in the water, I feel safe."

We climbed up onto the dock, took off our tanks and our BCs, and sat listening to the water. The knot in my stomach slowly came loose, and in the faint light I looked out toward the spot where we'd been diving. The funny thing was that I'd always wanted to see a nurse shark.

I made a necklace for Dara out of a Cyalume stick and a piece of string. The night she wore it we walked out to the sugar-mill ruins to see Sammy, an old mongoose who lived under the foundation. She wore it backward. I let her walk ahead of me and all I could see was the greenish-yellow glow.

We drank the rum again, but we got caught. Dara's mom smelled it on her breath when she got back to the bungalow. She slapped her face, Dara told me at breakfast. She said she'd slapped it so hard her bottom lip bled. She pulled her lip down to show me where the cut was. Before classes that morning, Dara, me, her mom, and my dad had a talk. My father didn't yell, but Dara's mother did. We promised not to drink any more rum. Then we all sat there in the classroom. Both of our parents were drinking coffee. They started talking about their work in marine biology, and after a while they let us leave.

That afternoon the four of us went snorkeling on the reef below Yawzi Point. Throughout that summer my father had been searching for the emerald-green St. Thomas false coral, *Rhodactis sanctithomae.* He had a theory that *Rhodactis* could kill corals and anemones with its tentacles, and would then expand to take up more space on the reef. Our goal was to find as many patches of *Rhodactis* as we could. We found eleven, and all but two bordered on dead coral or dead anemones.

Our parents sat together again that night during dinner. I sat with Dara at a different table, and we wondered if they would wind up having an affair. I said I doubted it. My father had a girlfriend and was in remission from leukemia. Dara said no, I was wrong. She said her mother understood how to make men want her.

We spied on them from Yawzi Point when they went back to map the patches of *Rhodactis.* That night I asked my dad if he was falling in love with Dara's mother, whose name was Julia. He said he wasn't. I said they seemed like a nice couple together. He said he was already a nice couple with Beverly.

I said, "I saw you in the water. Dara and I were at Yawzi Point."

"We were just diving," he said. "We're going to be co-authors on a study of *Rhodactis.*"

"But it was your idea first."

He said, "She's helping me. She's published a lot. Julia's also very, very smart."

"She's also mean," I said. "The other night, when she caught Dara, she slapped her face so hard her lip was bleeding."

"She's a good scientist," he said.

"You think it's O.K. to give Dara a bloody lip?"

"She didn't mean to," he said. "She told me she felt guilty."

"So does she know you were sick?"

He said, "I told her."

I was trying to hate Julia, but I couldn't. If nothing else, she was making my dad feel good. They sat together at every meal and had long talks about *Rhodactis.* They started leading dives together with their two classes. Dara and I went along on the dive to Europa Bay. It was the deepest dive we took that summer. According to my father's depth gauge, we were down seventy-two feet. The water was much darker and there wasn't as much reef to see. In certain places we swam between giant rocks that rose alongside us like walls. Dara was nervous—maybe because we saw a lot of barracudas. She kept on looking at me and stayed right next to me. She was so close that we could make the O.K. sign with our eyes.

As we were coming out from between those massive rocks we saw a sea turtle. Dara stopped swimming for a second. Then we were holding hands and swimming right at this gigantic creature. It had a polished black-and-caramel-colored shell and a curved beak. It swam away fast, flapping its legs like it was flying. Later that night, lying in bed, I kept imagining us holding hands and following the turtle.

They were screwing, Dara said.

And it was possible. I'd seen my father telephone Beverly after dinner, like he always did. Then he and Julia vanished. We checked the bungalows and every one of the classrooms. They weren't anywhere.

I said, "They might be just sitting on the beach somewhere. They could be talking about *Rhodactis.*"

"My mom's a slut," Dara said. She walked away from me and bent down on the volleyball court. She was picking up a stone. She said, "My mother will screw anyone she can."

"What does your father say?"

"He does it, too. It's not such a good marriage."

She kept picking up stones and throwing them through the volleyball net. I heard them hitting the ground on the other side.

"Let's get a mango," I said.

"Sometimes I hate my mother's guts."

"She seems O.K.," I said.

"Do you hate your father?"

I said, "No."

Dara kept staring at me, as if it was so strange that I liked my father.

I said, "How come your parents aren't seeing a therapist?"

"It wouldn't help much."

"How do you know?"

She said, "I know."

"My dad and his girlfriend, Beverly, see a therapist. They started going when he got sick."

"My parents aren't sick," Dara said. "Their only problem is that they're idiots."

"But still, a therapist could help them with their marriage—"

"Just leave me alone!" she yelled. "You stupid boy."

She walked away and went into her bungalow.

I yelled, "You're weird!" but followed anyway. There were no locks on the doors, so I walked right in. Dara was sitting at the foot of her bed, her arms crossed, looking as if she was in pain.

I said, "Let's not talk anymore about our parents."

She said, "You're right, I'm weird like you. I'm also angry."

"At who?"

"What?"

"Who are you angry at? You just said that you're angry."

"God, you're so dense," Dara said. She took my arm and pulled me down so I was sitting right beside her. I tried to kiss her, but she suddenly started crying. I asked, "What's wrong?" and she said, "My life." I asked her what was so bad about her life. She said her boyfriend Kyle had dumped her for an anorexic cheerleader. She said her father had been in Texas since late winter and her parents had been talking about divorce.

When she stopped crying we went outside. It was dusk. We walked for a long time—past Little Lameshur, and all the way down the path that led to Europa Bay. I'd only been there by boat, and was surprised that it was so unlike the sandy coast by Little Lameshur. The surf was rougher and the beach was covered with coral and rocks and shells and other dried-out reef things. We were holding hands and talking when I saw something very big, another shark shadow, lying ahead of us on the rocks. A jolt went through my chest and my first instinct was to run. "Oh, that poor dolphin!" Dara said, and I felt calmer when I realized that it wasn't a dead shark.

"PU, it stinks," Dara said, as we went closer.

The dolphin's dorsal fin was sticking up and looked rotted. Insects were flying all around it. It had probably been lying there for days. Dara picked up a piece of branch coral and threw it into the choppy water. I found some driftwood and poked the dolphin's tail with it. "Everything's dead here," Dara said.

Beverly arrived in St. John during the last week of July. She planned to stay through August. To my surprise, Dara adored her. She always wanted to sit near Beverly at meals. One night she told me, "Beverly's strong. I want to be her." Beverly was strong, in fact. And she was big, about five-eight. She had broad shoulders, strong arms, and a full chest, all of which made Julia look shrimpy.

Two days after Beverly arrived, she had a big fight with my father. They screamed and yelled, like they sometimes did. She called my father irresponsible and pathetic. She called Dara's mother a blond bitch. Everyone heard them, since the bungalows had screen windows. My father asked her to keep it down, but she yelled louder. After the fight they didn't talk and I thought Beverly might leave.

But then they sat together at dinner. Dara's mother wasn't there. Neither was Dara. They had gone into Cruz Bay to eat at a restaurant. Dara told me that her mother started crying during dinner, and that she drank so many piña coladas that afterward she threw up behind the taxi stand.

For a few days, I hardly saw Dara's mother. She avoided Beverly and my father, and sometimes walked the other way when she saw me. But the fight blew over. Beverly didn't leave the island. Julia started coming to meals again. One evening she sat down across from Beverly and my father at dinner. They chatted like old pals, and from then on they sat together at every meal. "Adults are strange," Dara said on the night the three of them had gone to Little Lameshur for a swim.

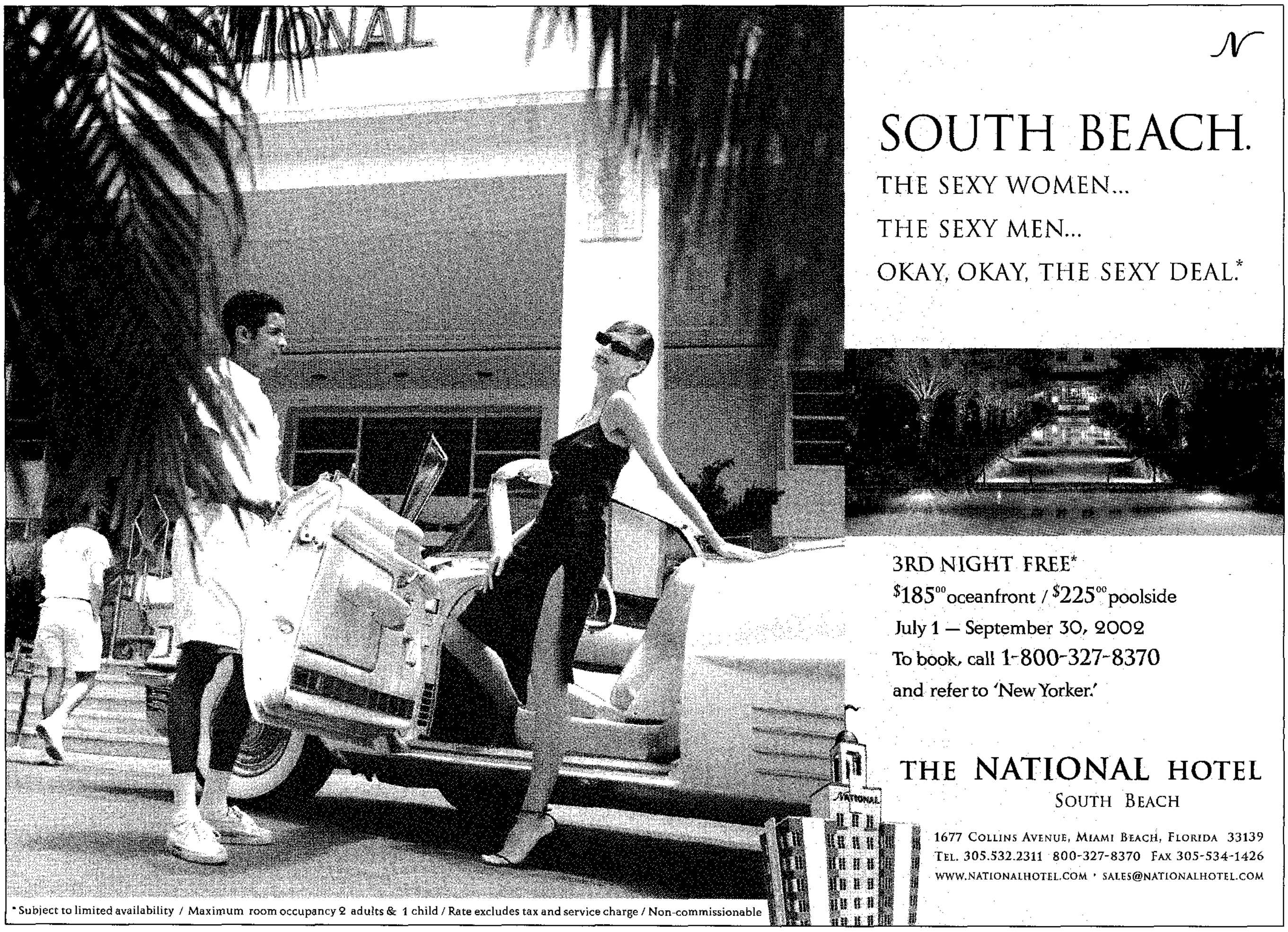
"Maybe my father and your mother never slept together," I suggested.

She shook her head. "They did."

I said, "You're positive?"

She said, "My mother spews out everything when she's drunk."

Beverly, Julia, and my father started to go out diving during the afternoons to look for more *Rhodactis*. One afternoon when Dara and I went with them my father got a nosebleed. I didn't know why he'd gone up until I got back to the boat. He had his head tipped back



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and Beverly was pressing a T-shirt against his nose.

After two more nosebleeds, he decided he should stop diving for a while. He said he needed to heal his nasal vessels. Almost incredibly, Julia and Beverly kept going out, the two of them. "Adults are strange" became Dara's recurring comment.

At night they'd all sit in the classroom and go over the new data. Dara called this their "*Rhodactis* ménage à trois." Once, we snuck up to the window and crouched, listening. We heard my father ask a riddle. What did one vulture say to the other? He told the answer—"Carry on"—and then Julia asked him how he was feeling. He said, "Not bad. So far there isn't any reason to leave the island."

A few days later, I caught my father holding hands with Julia. I'd gone to look for him in his classroom after his students had come out. When I walked in they were standing with their hands clasped. They pulled their hands apart but didn't seem concerned that I had caught them.

Dara was in a good mood that day. She'd gone out snorkeling in Big Lameshur by herself, although technically you should always have a buddy. She had discovered a small inlet full of fanworms. They look like colorful fans or feathers and live in coral. Later that afternoon, she took me to her secret inlet. We swam over the fanworms and dived down to touch them and make them pull their feathers in. One type of fanworm looks just like a tiny Christmas tree. I started thinking about Christmas and wondered whether my father would be alive then. I also had a thought that didn't make much sense but still seemed logical. I thought that somehow, in the ocean, we stay connected to everything that's dead.

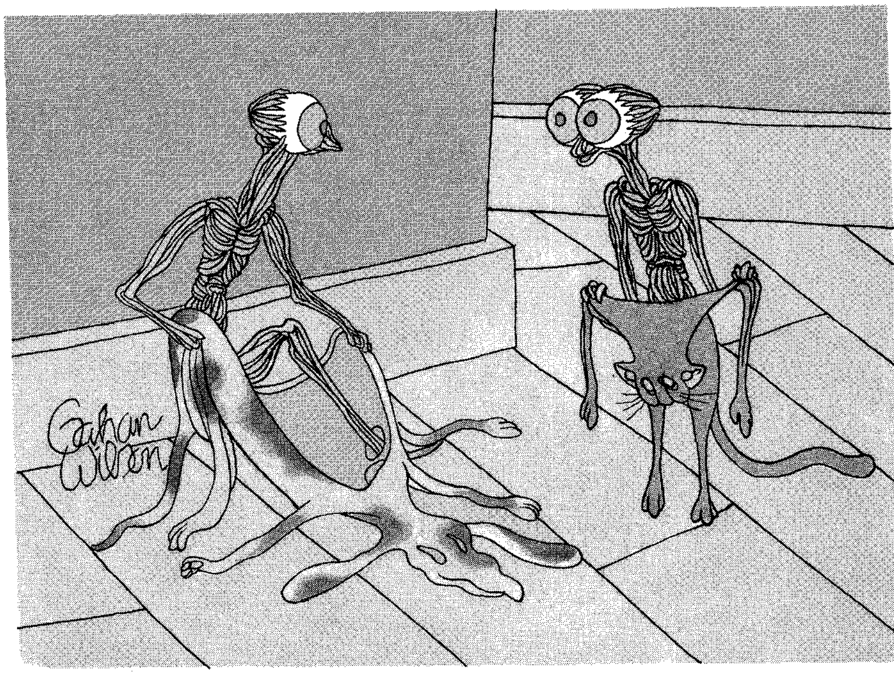
It was a hot day and very muggy. We swam back behind some rocks, where it was shallow. Dara unzipped her shorty wetsuit and peeled it down to her waist. She had a bathing suit underneath, and she slid the straps down off her shoulders. The suit was white and almost see-through and it looked sexy. She said, "Hey, big boy," and pulled her bathing suit down, too.

We took our masks and fins and all our clothes off. We piled everything up on one big rock. There was another rock that was even bigger, so we lay down on it and listened to that soft noise you can hear only when you're lying on rocks in a calm inlet beside the ocean.

"Sometimes I wish that we were older," I said.

Dara said nothing. She took my hand and kissed my knuckles.

I said, "I think we're in love, don't you? If we were older we could run away and live on some island just like this one."



"What say this week you be the cat and I'll be the dog?"

Dara sat up after that, breathed deeply, and said, "Please don't make me cry."

"I wasn't trying to."

She kissed my hand again and said, "You always act so serious."

I said, "I'm serious and brooding. My mother used to tell me I was sullen—and so what?"

Dara smiled and said, "O.K., so we're in love a little, maybe. But I live in stupid Utah. And I don't plan to move to any islands. Don't get too mushy on me, O.K.?"

I said, "O.K."

After dinner that night, there was a movie, but it was still so hot that Dara and I decided to take another swim. I went to the bungalow for a flashlight. My dad and Beverly were there, standing between my bed and theirs and kissing passionately. I quickly took two steps backward and snuck away.

Dara and I went swimming off the dock at Big Lameshur. We swam too close to a shallow reef and I hit fire coral. It stung me all over my left arm and chest. It didn't hurt that much at first, though that was probably because I was in the water. When I told Dara, she touched the welt but couldn't see it in the dark. "Feels like a nice one," she said. "I guess you really pissed off that patch of coral." When we got out and sat down on the beach, she pulled a flashlight from our pile of towels and clothes and said, "O.K., let's see the damage." She shined the light onto my chest and said, "Holy fucking fuck."

It was late when I got back. My father and Beverly were sleeping, lying close on the twin beds they'd pushed together. I wasn't sure who to wake, but I woke Beverly because she was a doctor. I showed her the big welt and whispered, "Fire coral." She took one look and slid out of bed.

She brought me over to the School for Field Studies infirmary. When she turned the light on, the welt looked scary. It was all blistery and red and not like any injury I had ever seen. She cleaned it off and rubbed some cream on it. She said the welt on my arm wasn't so bad but that the one on my chest would hurt for a few days.

I said, "Dad told me that if he dies you're going to adopt me."

She pursed her lips the way she often did. She said, "I'd like to."

I said, "I'm glad."

Beverly smiled. Her smile was full of happiness and sadness, both at once.

I said, "So how do you think he is?"

"I've seen him better."

"I think he's happy now," I said. "He likes the research he's doing on *Rhodactis*."

Beverly nodded to me, cautiously. She said, "Yes, I think he's enjoyed the summer."

"Things are O.K., then?" I asked.

"Right now they're fine. But I still need you to do me a big favor."

"What?" I asked.

She said, "The thing is, I need you to get ready. Things may change soon."

I said, "How soon?"

Beverly stared at me. Her eyes were aqua blue.

"I don't know. That's why I need you to get ready."

"Ready for what?"

She said, "Your father hasn't been completely well. He's very tired. There are other symptoms."

"Of leukemia?"

She said, "Jordan."

"What?"

"Your father's going to be sick again."

She slid her hands under my arms and picked me up off the table where I was sitting. This amazed me. Beverly picked me up no problem, like I was five. She set me down on my feet and crouched so that our eyes were exactly level. She said, "This year might be very, very hard."

The next morning I woke to the sound of braying donkeys. One of them stood right outside, looking at me through the screen. "Someone please kill that thing," said Beverly. I had to pee, so I went outside and shooed him. He took two steps back and proceeded to bray his head off once again.

I felt awake, and I told my dad and Beverly I was going to walk down to Little Lameshur. Dad mumbled, "Fine," though he was already half asleep again. It must have been about six o'clock, but the sun seemed hot, so I wore my tank top. I wandered out toward Little Lameshur and decided to walk the path to Yawzi Point.

It was the first time I'd been out there without Dara. I sat down on a rock that jutted out above the reef. The fire-coral welt on my chest still burned and I took my top off so the cool breeze would soothe it. A group of pelicans swam below me. They were fishing around the reef, and every now and then one of them would dive under. They sometimes twisted their necks so far that when they surfaced they would be swimming in the opposite direction. I watched one tilt back its head to swallow a fish that was still alive and flapping inside its throat pouch.

Two other pelicans crashed down and joined the others. I thought about the talk I'd had with Beverly, and somehow watching this group of pelicans seemed to be a way of getting ready. So did looking at the turquoise surface of the water. So did imagining everything beneath it. All the trumpetfish and damselfish and angelfish. The spotted moray eels and sea cucumbers and stingrays and barracudas. Ten feet beneath the water's surface, there were sea sponges in every different color you could imagine. There were bright-yellow-and-pink anemones and the emerald-green false coral *Rhodactis*. The more I thought the more I realized I could go on and on with all the things that lived inside the ocean.

Another pelican smashed into the water, and as I watched it land I got the urge to climb down the steep slope. One short stretch was almost vertical, and when I got down I wondered what I had been thinking. I wasn't going to be able to climb back up. The only way back was to swim to Little Lameshur. I leapt onto a big rock and saw a cavern of deep water just beyond it. A school of blue tang passed beneath me. I dived in.

Without a mask, everything was blurry. I kept my eyes open and saw vague shapes that were coral mounds and sponge formations ten or fifteen feet below me. It was slow going with my sneakers, but I kept swimming out to where it was too deep to see the bottom. I knew that nurse sharks and lemon sharks might be swimming underneath me. For all I knew, a great white shark was down there, but I kept holding my breath and kicking through the water, now and then looking up to see where the group of pelicans had gone. ♦

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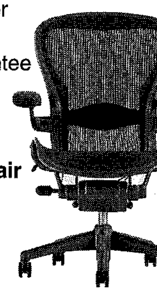

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THE CRITICS

IN FASHION

NOBLESSE DE ROBE

Bill Blass's memoirs recall a gallant life of unpretentious chic.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

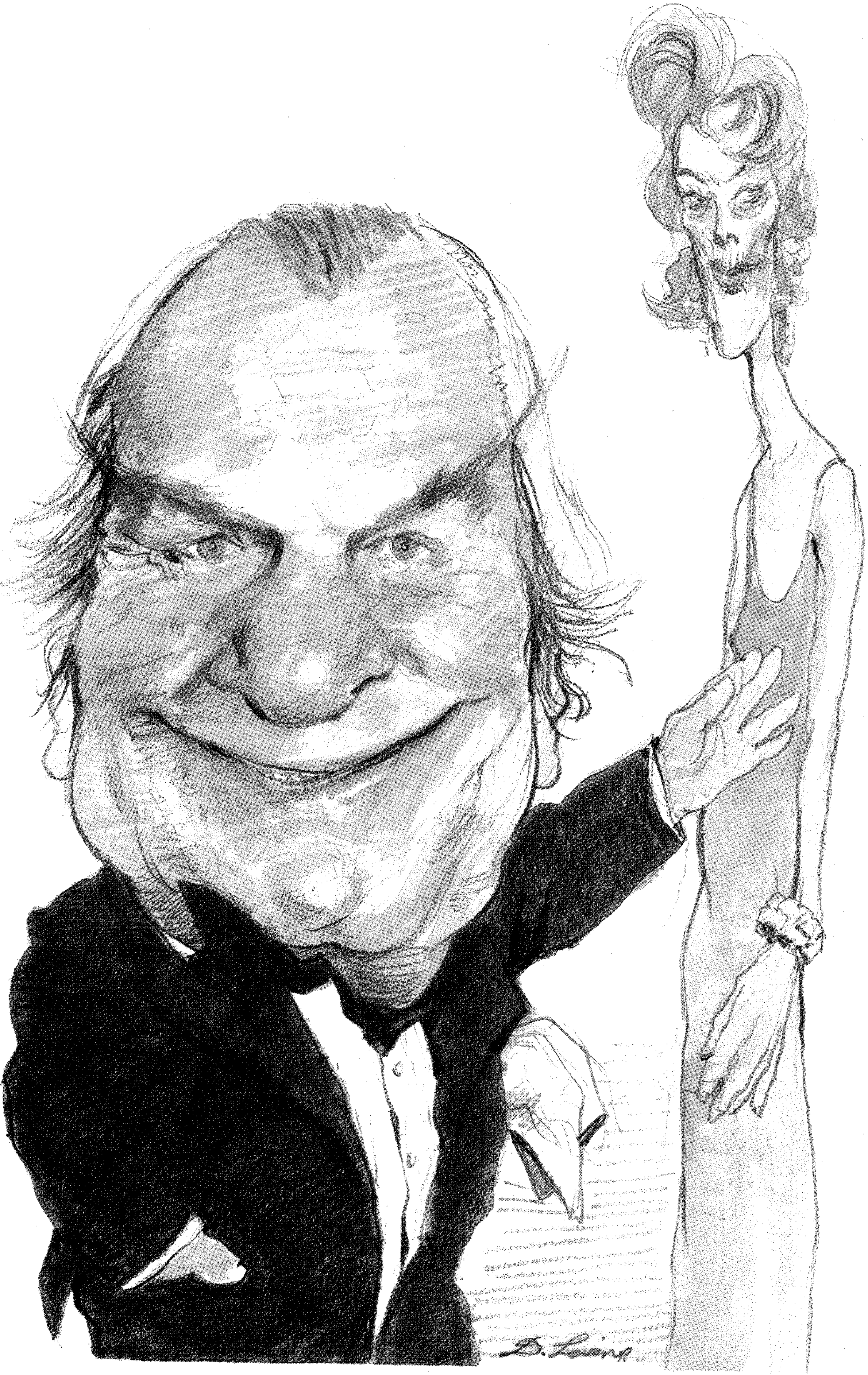
I never bought a piece of clothing by Bill Blass, although I inherited one of his down coats from my mother. It was a shapeless bed sack of reversible two-tone gray cotton, ash on one side, slate on the other, and there is nothing better for walking the dog on a frigid morning. Blass was a great dog lover. Indeed, the only slobbering he could tolerate—he had a horror of effusions—was that of his adored retrievers. I'm fairly sure, however, that Blass himself didn't design that coat, at least, I hope not. It was among the merchandise that he licensed for production and ennobled with his signature, not always with impeccable discrimination—jeans, luggage, chocolates, linens, eyewear, a backgammon set, and, perhaps best known of all, a Lincoln Continental. He consulted with the maker about color schemes, even though he candidly admitted that he'd never tested the product personally. He couldn't drive.

The man behind the label, a patrician by affinity, was an autodidact of considerable culture and disarming humility. I have heard admiration for his character expressed by a surprising cross-section of New Yorkers—surprising because the disillusionment with the rich that followed the Reagan decade, during which Blass was a frequent guest at the White House, and the more recent falls from grace of so many posh felons haven't tarnished him. "There was nothing ersatz about the Blass style," said a friend of mine, a downtown architect who voted for Ralph Nader in the last Presidential election. "In that respect, it reminds me of Cesar Pelli's World Financial Center. Neither Pelli nor Blass is a visionary, and in both cases the work celebrates money and power, but somehow you don't hate it. I think it's because they represent a republican rather than an imperial image of capitalism. It's not the Wall Street of junk bonds and boiler rooms. And it's not the fashion Disneyland of Ralph Lauren. Blass looked like the president of an old family bank—someone you would trust with your life savings."

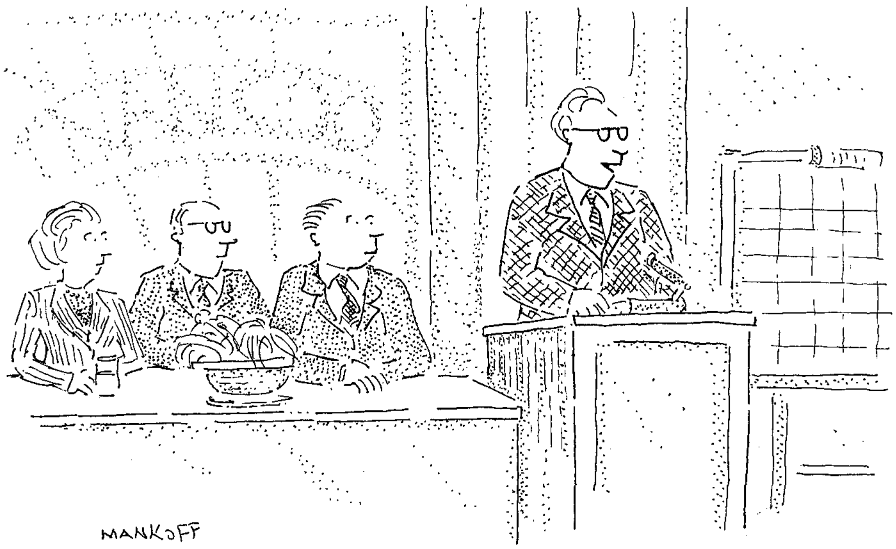
The Blass family didn't have a bank, or even much of an account at one. To understand desire, one has to be, or remember having been, hungry, and perhaps that is why the history of fashion has mostly been written from the outside in—not by scions of the ruling class but by provincials shaking off the dreariness of their milieu. Worth started out as a shop assistant. Chanel, who grew up in an orphanage, was the bastard daughter of a peddler. Paul Poiret was a draper's son. The father of Adrian (a Mr. Greenburg) made hats for the matrons of Naugatuck, Connecticut. Mainbocher, né Main Bocher (his names rhyme with "plain" and "rocker," not "élan" and "cachet") worked briefly as a wholesale florist in Chicago. And then there is Bill Blass. Those two clubby monosyllables are as crisply percussive as the slapping of a jib in the breeze off Hobe Sound. Yet "Blassy," as he was known to his school friends, grew up in a middle-class house with a singularly hideous brick porch next door to a costume-rental company in Fort Wayne, Indiana. A favorite treat was a white-bread sandwich of cold, leftover mashed potatoes with mayonnaise from a jar. His vowels were flat, and he wasn't much of a sport. As a teen-ager, he owned a pair of dubiously tasteful pearl-gray shoes. His classmates at South Side High School nevertheless voted him "the best dressed and least likely to succeed." His greatest ambition was "to get out." The movies of the nineteen-thirties taught him about penthouse life and the quainter locutions of the gentry. He fanned the flames of his escape fantasies with his mother's back issues of *Vogue*. Ethyl Blass was a dressmaker and the widow of a travelling hardware salesman. The mother who sews seems to be a folk archetype, particularly in stories of rags to riches. (Wallis Simpson had one. So did Eva Perón.) Her selfless needlework provides her child's—her changeling's—first noble disguise.

Halston and Norell also both happen to be Hoosiers. But then most interesting Americans were originally someone else, and we can make too much of the fact that so many of our seminally debonair men of the world—Scott Fitzgerald, Fred Astaire, and Cole Porter, to name the big three—hailed from midsize Midwestern cities of the Rotarian persuasion. The geniuses (like Astaire), the aesthetes (like Blass), the bohemians (like Fitzgerald), those brimming with effervescence (like Porter) can't stand the stasis and the conformity—they have to emigrate. "There is nothing like the dull, unattractive childhood to give a bedazzled boy the *right* push," Blass observes in his memoir, "Bare Blass" (HarperCollins; $29.95). In 1999, the year he sold his company for a reported fifty million dollars and retired from fashion, he decided to break a self-imposed lifetime taboo against airing his private affairs, and he began reminiscing to his collaborator, Cathy Horyn, a fashion critic for the New York *Times*, in the autumn of 2000, a few months after he had been diagnosed with throat cancer. "Of course, the beauty of my upbringing was in its plainness," he writes. "As a consequence of having little money ourselves and no social standing above my mother's widowed respectability—and even here we might have stood to gain some ground if my father had died instantly and unambiguously in a highway crash rather than by a self-inflicted gunshot wound in our front

DAVID LEVINE



Blass was a gentleman among garmentos. "I think that I'm partially responsible for bringing a respectability to this business," he said.



"And so, while the end-of-the-world scenario will be rife with unimaginable horrors, we believe that the pre-end period will be filled with unprecedented opportunities for profit."

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parlor—I learned . . . how to occupy myself." Blass was five, and he dates from that time both a "budding genius for avoiding anything unpleasant or ugly" and a lifelong preoccupation, the strain of which was always stoically dissembled, with "keeping up appearances." He recalls making one of his first sketches about a year later, of a butler serving drinks on a Manhattan terrace. One wonders what role in that scene he imagined for himself: the dapper host or the suave friend of the house? It presumably wasn't the retainer.

Blass died on June 12, 2002, ten days shy of eighty, done in by a lifetime of "joyous smoking." He was a man who savored his hard-earned pleasures without apology or regret, but without sanctimony or pretension, and that is how he tells his tale. His prose has the gruff chic, the virile aplomb, and the elusiveness of his persona—qualities the French call *retenu*, though one would never mistake Blass for anything but a Wasp of the bite-your-tongue, count-your-blessings, take-your-licks, elbows-off-the-table old school. What he has the nerve to call "the fag elements of fashion" were alien to him. The "presentable young man" on the make who grew so seamlessly into his impostures that he was described by nearly every one of his friends as the "perfect gentleman"—perhaps because he possessed the flair and refinement of a snob without actually being one—knew that pathos, like complacency, is fundamentally vulgar and unamusing. He gets all the heartbreaking stuff about his arid Depression childhood out of the way wryly in his first two chapters. His grandfather's suicide is an aside, and his mother's silence on the subject of these two painful paternal secrets a tolerable chagrin. He alludes only briefly to the death, in a training accident on Parris Island in 1942, of Ed Guild, his "first real friend" (and, one suspects, his great unrequited love), and declines to dwell upon the unctuous local "Humberts" of Fort Wayne who, posing as benefactors and playing on the longing of a fatherless boy for a man he could talk to and admire, preyed on him from the age of eight. "I can't claim," Blass writes, "that these experiences put me for or against homosexuality (nor would I bother to)." Insouciance can be an expression of dignity—it can even be heroic—and "Bare Blass" reminds one that the suppressed grief and shame seeping from the hairline crack in a highly veneered character is often more affecting than a confessional Niagara.

The memoirist deflects any pity his confidences might inspire by noting that "everybody had troubles" during the Depression. He also notes that, throughout

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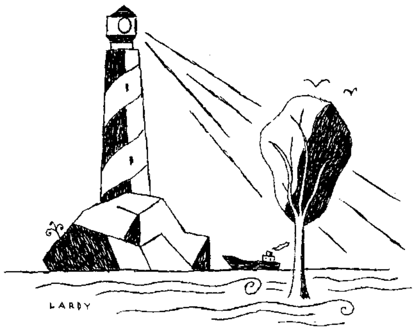
a life that was hardly celibate or reclusive, but which he never chose to share with a partner of either sex (he neither concealed nor flaunted his preference for men, though he enjoyed a series of *amitiés amoureuses* with women), he made a specialty of the unceremonious exit from the "emotional entanglement." Blass was famous for his bonhomie as a dinner companion, and for his ribald garrulity on every topic but himself, yet in his own grandly austere Sutton Place apartment and the eighteenth-century stone house in Litchfield County that was practically Cistercian he eschewed comfortable furniture because it might encourage a visitor to settle in. Having "cooled" it, as he calls dying, he forbade his friends to hold a funeral or a memorial service. One has the feeling that perhaps he didn't stick around for his book party or for the opening of a retrospective of his career at the Indiana University Art Museum—scheduled for October 4th and accompanied by a glossy *Festschrift* ("Bill Blass: An American Designer"; Abrams; $65)—because he dreaded the fawning.

Blass was single-minded about being in fashion, in both senses, from a young age. At fifteen, he was selling sketches of evening gowns to a New York manufacturer. While still in high school, he won second prize in a design competition sponsored by the Chicago *Tribune*, and as soon as he had graduated, in 1940, he moved to New York, where he got a job as a sketch artist with the Seventh Avenue manufacturer David Crystal. A salary of thirty-five dollars a week paid for a room in an Upper West Side apartment and tuition for night classes in design. After Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the Army, and was recruited for the 603rd Camouflage Battalion, a company, he writes, of "creative types," mostly artists, ad men, or recent art-school graduates. (Ellsworth Kelly and the Hollywood set designer George Diestel were among them.) The unit shipped out shortly after D Day, arriving on Omaha Beach in July of 1944, and took part in the last big offensives of the war, though not as combat troops—as decoys. Their highly classified missions, carried out at night, in the mud of rural France, behind the front lines, were intended to keep the Germans guessing about the movements of Allied armor or infantry, and they involved deploying a column of inflatable rubber tanks and simulating traffic and battle noise, "so, when Von Ramcke looked the next morning through the haze and battle smoke with his field glasses, he thought he was seeing Patton's forces." Before each operation, the 603rd had to change the insignia on its vehicles and uniforms; Blass's valor consisted, appropriately, of painting, sewing, impersonation, and "dreaming up marvelous new uses for chicken feathers." His best friend kept a field diary recording their secret maneuvers, but Blass's notebooks were filled with "miniature drawings of ladies' hats, shoes, gloves, and dresses," and with doodles of the mirrored "B"s that became his logo. In all his photographs, he points out, he's "smiling idiotically." The Army made "a mama's boy" into a man, and it was apparently the only place that he felt free to risk loving: not an individual but an ideal of fraternity.



After his discharge, Blass reapplied for his old job, but Crystal rejected him on the ground that he was "too ambitious." He worked briefly for Anne Klein, who put out the word that he had beautiful manners but no talent and fired him. He then settled into what he describes as a period of peonage as an assistant at the dress firm of Anna Miller, which was later absorbed into the larger house of her brother, Maurice Rentner, where Blass spent a decade designing adroitly detailed Diorish suits and drapey chiffons that were flattering to a mature clientele. Only when Rentner died, in 1960, did his grudging partners put Blass's name on their label. He then began to turn out "some of the best work of my career—snappy minidresses and fur-trimmed coats," and to experiment with his signature incongruities: flannels and sequins; ruffles and tweed; gingham and lace; a mink peacoat; a taffeta ball

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skirt worn with a long cashmere cardigan; or a corduroy topper tossed with nonchalance over beaded trousers. But he was still seething about his accumulated humiliations fifty years later. Designers, he reminds us, were "considered trade" and expected to "keep their heads down," and they were sometimes even asked to use the service elevator. He once compared the stigma of his profession to that of being an actor in sixteenth-century France: it "denied one the right of Christian burial." One particularly insufferable "garmento" had summoned Blass to his apartment for a job interview, then kept him waiting in the butler's pantry while he entertained his friends at a cocktail party.

Blass is widely credited with being the architect of the "bridge" that links fashion to society. It is now such an essential feature of the cityscape that one forgets how remote from each other, and how parochial, those two island cultures were. "I think that I'm partially responsible for bringing a respectability of a new kind to this business," he said. Cathy Horyn's assessment of Blass's importance is less measured: "It should be obvious to almost anybody that no designer has more profoundly influenced American life," she wrote in a profile. "More than Ralph Lauren, more than Calvin Klein . . . he changed the status of designers." Fashion being fashion, ergo perverse, the minute designers got some respect, a younger generation without gratitude for the sacrifices that were made on its behalf wasted no time in becoming as louche as possible. But, in part because Blass's work is so devoid of proletarian or subversive tendencies and in part because his guerrilla camouflage was a bespoke tuxedo, it is hard to think of him as a catalyst for social change, much less as a liberator of untouchables, the Gandhi of Seventh Avenue.

In the early fifties, Blass was still a lowly "cloakie" by day, but by night—armed with his urbanity, his chiselled profile, a hollow leg, wicked repartee, a faux Jockey Club accent, and the potent charm that resides in an upstart's infallible instinct for the insecurities of the powerful—he embarked on a career in café society as a ubiquitous extra man. "It was an era of great chanteuses—and clean hair and long, long necks," he writes. The action was at the Stork Club, El Morocco, and the Blue Angel, where he cravenly told the swank strangers he got drunk with ("occasionally very drunk") that he was "in advertising." He also kept the glamorous "gals" on the leopard-skin banquettes "under surveillance," though not, of course, sexually: he was interested in what they had on. The mothers of débutantes were reassured by his table manners, and the grandes dames by his courtier's tact as a "listener." He eventually made some impressive conquests: Mrs. Gilbert (Kitty) Miller, who, according to C. Z. Guest, "was a hell of a snob"; Missy Bancroft, a young socialite who did some modelling; movie stars like Kim Stanley, Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, and Cary Grant; and the droll, fastidious Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg, an editor at *Vogue*, who was the first to ferret Blass and his talent for "jazzy realism" from the back room at Anna Miller and, as Blass puts it, to "shove" Diana Vreeland "in my general direction."

By the end of the decade, Blass was doing ingratiating and handsome but derivative clothes influenced by Norell, Mainbocher, Saint Laurent, and, even more so, by a small coterie of muses—American beauties with big allowances and blue blood who had "the confidence to mix things up," and who embodied the "lean, agile, racy" style that he aspired to. They were women like Chessy Rayner, then a junior editor at *The Ladies' Home Journal*, who patronized Mme. Grès but also shopped for men's chinos at the Army-Navy store and wore them with a dressy jacket; or like Gloria Vanderbilt, who casually threw a sable coat over a pair of gray flannel trousers; or like Mrs. Guest, who wore her country-house uniform of twin set and tweed skirt to lunch at the Ritz in Paris. None of these women were, like their contemporary Jacqueline Kennedy, exclusively besotted with what Blass endearingly calls French "snottiness." "And so it came to me," he wrote in this magazine five years ago, "that there could be a way of designing for women that was, in the best sense, *American*."

What was most American about Blass was his success as a businessman and his frank relish for its perks: a penthouse with a river view, a staff (valet, driver, and chef), a Savile Row wardrobe. The entrepreneur was more adventurous, by far, than the designer—an intrepid pioneer of self-promotion. While still indentured to the Rentner partners, he began, despite their misgivings, to market his own "Blass-famous" glamour, in an advertising campaign conceived by Jane Trahey. It was unique for its time, and it featured Vreelandish lists of his likes and dislikes about women. (He liked one who could "cuss in five languages" and disliked one who did the crossword puzzle in ink.) He had himself photographed under the Brooklyn Bridge with two machine-gun-toting hit women wearing fedoras, kitten heels, and tasteful "little nothing" dresses: "Next time you want something knockout that won't be knocked off . . . invest in Bill Blass." He appealed to the vast, lucrative market of the unsvelte with the image of a model in a voluminous caftan eating a mound of spaghetti above the tag line: "The Blass Diet: Feel Free." In 1967, he was the first American designer of upscale women's wear to introduce a high-fashion line for men (although the swagger of the plaids suggested the kind of men who did armed business out of limos under the Brooklyn Bridge). Once Blass became his own master, in 1970, he followed the example set by Pierre Cardin and began to amass a fortune from licensing agreements. "The couture," he told John Duka in 1980, with his typical distaste for hypocrisy, "is . . . the come-on. It's not the moneymaker, it's the bait. If I didn't have my clothes, I couldn't have my licensees, and if I didn't have those, I couldn't live the way I do." The clothes might be the bait, but their hook was the Blass charisma, and his presence at trunk shows spiked sales dramatically. He never had any priestly qualms about peddling his wares in provincial department stores or hotel ballrooms, where, squinting through the smoke from a Carlton, he flirted gamely with the "old broads" from Houston or Grosse Pointe, bossing them around as they emerged from the fitting room, cheeks flushed and checkbooks in hand.

Plenty of rich scoundrels make it through the needle's eye into fashion heaven: all it seems to take is an acquaintance with Karl Lagerfeld's diet doctor. It's the man who lives by appearances yet isn't deceived by them who's the rarity. Blass never mystified himself or posed as an artist: fashion was a "craft," and it was "pretentious to be in awe of it." He certainly did nothing to hurt his reputation for human decency by giving ten million dollars to the New York Public Library, or raising important sums for AIDS research, or, without publicity, supporting the careers of younger designers.

The Blass fashion legacy is less obvious, at least to me, someone who does crossword puzzles in ink. Blass used to bristle when his work was called "wearable" by critics or by fans, though he eventually accepted the term as a badge of honor—a decoration for gallantry to women. He respected the intelligence of his customers, particularly those who didn't live in New York, wear black, and weigh nothing, and he treated them as constituents rather than as subjects of a monarch. But what, in principle, is most refreshingly democratic—not only about Blass but about American style, in general, and about much of American fashion journalism—is often, in practice, what is most pedestrian: it's too remedial.

The best of Blass (and it isn't the Reagan-era ruffled poufs or lamé dinner suits) is difficult to date, though is that because the clothes are ageless or because contemporary fashion is so anarchic that every period and impulse seems modern? He uses a perceptive phrase to describe the nineteen-sixties: "cruelly demographic." The demographics of fashion are cruel to every generation as it ages. Blass liked to think that his work spoke to a free spirit, a woman with her own identity, not a "clotheshorse." But looking through the photographs in "Bare Blass" of his friends and clients, I don't see any models for the kind of glamorous old witch I would like to be. Beneath the surface dazzle, there is something extinguished about the Blass Ladies—a flame smothered by convention. When style burns true, it's cooler and more cryptic. You can't place it or decode it at a glance. And, for all his generosity, Blass couldn't bestow it, though he had it himself to a sovereign degree. It's the chameleon's trick of plainly being not what you seem. ♦

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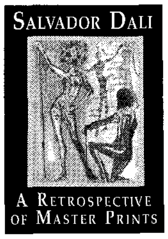

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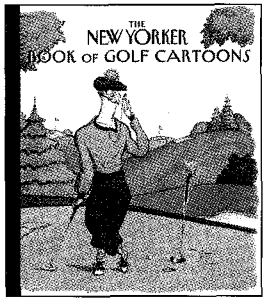

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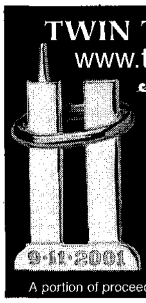

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The stories of Arthur Schnitzler, the amoral voice of fin-de-siècle Vienna.

BY LEO CAREY

One September evening in 1887, Arthur Schnitzler, a young doctor with literary aspirations, was out walking with a friend on the Ringstrasse, the grand new boulevard encircling the old city of Vienna. A pretty young woman caught his eye, and Schnitzler suggested that they all go back to his place, where he kept a bottle of cognac handy for just this sort of occasion. Jeanette Heger was twenty-two and made a living doing needlework in a modest apartment she shared with her sisters. The next afternoon, she visited alone. She found the doctor playing the piano and sat down at his feet. Her presence made it hard to use the pedals but easy for him to move his fingers from the keys to her blond hair. "This little prelude," he later recalled, "was soon over."

For rudderless young men from good families, fin-de-siècle Vienna offered many distractions. There were afternoons spent betting on horses or playing billiards in cafés, and evenings spent at the theatre or in the arms of girls like Jeanette. Schnitzler made his name capturing this aimless, pleasure-seeking atmosphere in plays and stories that drew on his own aimless, pleasure-seeking existence. "It ought to provide some pretty memories," he noted casually in his diary a few weeks after meeting Jeanette. Five years later, in Schnitzler's first theatrical success, "Anatol," the eponymous dandy echoed this sentiment—or, rather, lack of sentiment—adding a glaze of nostalgia in the process:

> There I was at the piano. She—was at my feet. So that I couldn't use the pedal. Her head was in my lap. Her tousled hair reflected the green and red from the lamp. I was improvising at the piano. But only with my left hand. She was pressing my right hand to her lips. . . . I felt at that moment I was passionately loved. I felt surrounded by it. . . . And again I had the stupidly divine thought "You poor—poor child!" The episodic nature of the experience came very clear to me. While I felt her warm breath on my hand, I had the sensation that I was remembering it all from a distance. As though it were already past.

"Anatol" established Schnitzler as the sardonic, amoral voice of his generation. His early plays discussed sex with unprecedented candor: a woman reminisces about losing her virginity, a man makes hopeless excuses for his impotence, young unmarried couples conduct affairs without a thought for the mores of their elders. Audiences were scandalized, censors agitated, and critics outraged. Schnitzler's name became a byword for licentiousness. His literary friends teased him about being a pornographer, and some of his plays were more famous for being banned than for being performed.

The trouble with notoriety, however, is that it doesn't last. Schnitzler's literary reputation has now declined to the point where—at least outside Austria and Germany—he is little more than a name. Though he still interests critics and cultural historians, they tend to discuss him as a specimen of something larger—as Viennese, as proto-Freudian, as Jewish, as a thread in the gaudy fabric of fin-de-siècle culture. The result is to render him so much a man of his time that he disappears into his context. A case in point is Peter Gay's recent study "Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815-1914" (Norton; $27.95). Gay, who treats Schnitzler as Exhibit A in a polemic asserting that Victorians were not the prudes we take them for, is far more interested in Schnitzler the philanderer than in Schnitzler the writer. Meanwhile, Schnitzler's own works pop in and out of print every thirty years or so, as if governed by some sort of literary Kondratieff wave. "Night Games," a selection of Schnitzler's fiction in new translations by Margret Schaefer (Ivan R. Dee; $28.50), aims to reverse this trend and establish him as a neglected great of world literature. There may be reason for hope. Even as Schnitzler himself has lapsed into obscurity, his work has remained popular as the basis for movies, TV serials, and plays. Most recently, Stanley Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut," adapted from a late Schnitzler novella, takes place in contemporary New York; David Hare's "The Blue Room," adapted from Schnitzler's sex comedy "Reigen" (a.k.a. "La Ronde"), is set in contemporary London. These recyclings suggest that behind all the fin-de-siècle props—demimondaines, officers, aristocrats, duels, dances, and dalliances—lurks something strangely modern.

Although Freud called him his doppelgänger, Schnitzler had an unsentimentally ironic, common-sensical streak.

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Arthur Schnitzler was born in Vienna in 1862 and grew up amid the great flourishing of liberal Viennese culture. It was a time of cosmopolitan affluence, burgeoning excess, and, for Jewish families like the Schnitzlers, an ease of assimilation that would have been unthinkable a generation earlier. Johann Schnitzler, Arthur's father, was a prominent laryngologist, but the atmosphere at home was as much artistic as medical. Young Arthur spent a happy childhood playing the piano, scribbling juvenilia, and meeting many of the leading actors and singers of the day, whose voices were in his father's care and who became family friends.

At sixteen, he started visiting prostitutes. His father found out by snooping in his son's diary and dragged the boy to his study to trawl through the revolting illustrations in a three-volume encyclopedia of venereal disease. Peter Gay is particularly fascinated by this episode. The confrontation, with its contending themes of sex, disease, propriety, and privacy, "opens up the macrocosm of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture," he maintains. In the event, it did no good. Rejecting his father's industrious example, Arthur hung out with louche friends and unsuitable women; his main goal in the next decade seemed to be having as much sex as possible. His diaries of the period make extraordinary reading. For several years, he logged every orgasm achieved with his various girlfriends and drew up yearly totals, subdivided by mistress. His stocktaking entry for New Year's Day, 1890, was typical in its calm, efficient caddishness:

> Met Helene -
> Flowers from Mizi
> Letter from Olga
> Farewell letter to Jean

The mere number of his conquests, however, was far less remarkable than his detachment and relentless self-scrutiny. In effect, Schnitzler was gathering material. His diaries eventually ran to eight thousand pages, and he reread them assiduously throughout his life, in search of inspiration. It was another trait he shared with Anatol, for whom experience serves mainly as a source of banter. "Last week I had supper twice each evening. With the girl I'm trying to win. And with the one I'm trying to lose. Unfortunately I've succeeded in neither." That the lines come off as a little too pat is half the point.

Schnitzler's early plays capture their particular epoch so well that, even during their author's lifetime, they came to seem like period pieces—Strauss waltzes drowned out by Schoenbergian discord. By contrast, his stories have

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aged hardly at all. Although the subject matter is the same (illicit affairs among the Viennese bourgeoisie), the atmosphere of engaging superficiality is abandoned for narratives of extreme interiority. If the plays are all talk, the fiction is all thought. In "The Widower," the earliest story in the collection "Night Games," a newly bereaved husband, sifting through his wife's letters, gets a nasty surprise—a packet of love letters in the handwriting of his best friend:

> And the first word that Richard reads, even before he has torn off the blue silk ribbon, strikes him numb for a moment. . . . With wide open eyes he looks around to see if everything in the room is still the same, and then he looks up at the ceiling, and then again at the letters that are now lying silent in front of him and yet in the next minute will tell him everything that the first word intimated. . . .

The ellipses here are Schnitzler's, a favorite device in moments of crisis, as a character's thoughts race in all directions. Richard's glance at the objects in the room is a beautifully judged gesture, conveying the attempt to anchor himself in the everyday. Characteristically, Schnitzler forestalls the obvious reaction of anger and hatred until the very end of the story and puts his widower through every conceivable emotion—calm, unworldly understanding, generalized cynicism, and a sudden strange, affectionate concern that his friend should not know of his discovery. Schnitzler never shows just one emotion where four conflicting ones will do. "The soul is a vast domain," a character in a later work says. "So many contradictions find room in us. . . . We try our best to maintain order in ourselves, but this order is really just synthetic. Our natural condition is chaos."

Given the Vienna of his time, Schnitzler's interest in the nascent field of psychology was to be expected. Though he had followed his father into the specialty of laryngology, he reviewed pioneering works of psychology and neurology by Charcot, Krafft-Ebing, and others for a medical journal his father had founded. He was particularly fascinated by the voguish therapy of hypnosis, with its promise of the mind laid bare, and adapted it to his own discipline, hypnotizing patients who had lost their voices. He sometimes worried that his stories read too much like case histories, that their psychological elements risked overshadowing everything else. But, as case histories, they won the approval of Sigmund Freud himself, who called Schnitzler his doppelgänger, and expressed envy that he seemed able to intuit "secret knowledge" that he himself could discover "only after arduous examination." Schnitzler was flattered, but he was also reluctant to be claimed wholesale by the Freudians. He had an ironic, common-sensical streak that made him wary of supposing people to

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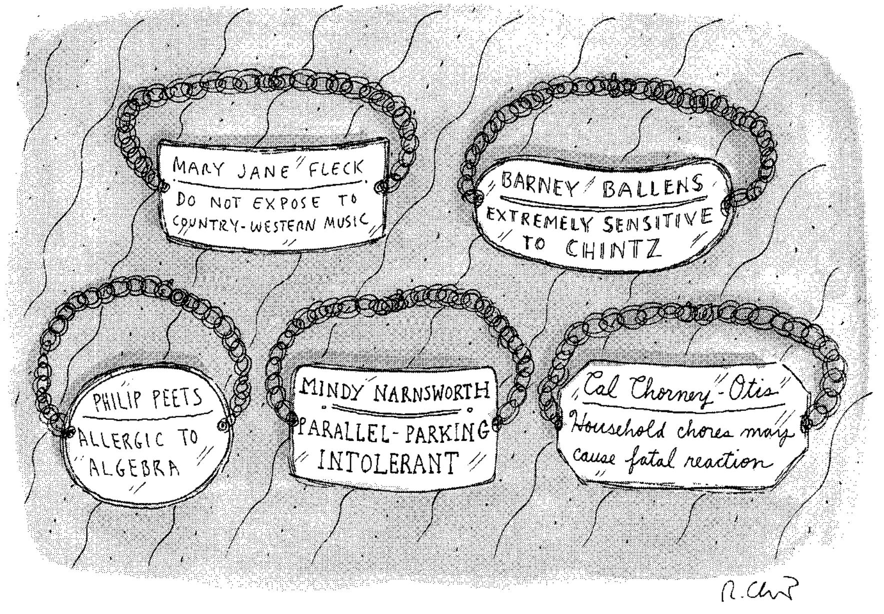
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be more complex than they were. In his memoirs, he recalls a flirtatious patient and starts to speculate that she wanted to make her lover jealous by visiting a young doctor who happened to be in the same building. But then: "No. Too much psychology here. Let us say simply: he was a fool, she was a little beast, and I was awkward."

By the turn of the century, Schnitzler was as famous as any writer in Austria. Along with Hugo von Hofmannsthal, he emerged as the most important of the literary set known as Young Vienna. And his work was broadening in scope. Influenced by Ibsen, whom he visited in Norway, he tried to address a range of social and political issues. He assailed the officer class and its obsession with duelling, first in a play, "Freiwild," then in the satirical novella "Lieutenant Gustl," a comic stream-of-consciousness monologue that depicts a brash officer stewing over a petty insult from a baker. The story provoked anti-Semitic rage from right-wing newspapers, and Schnitzler was dismissed from the regiment where he had done his military service.

Meanwhile, as he entered his forties, the pace of his sex life was becoming a little less frenetic. In 1903, he married Olga Gussmann, an aspiring actress and singer twenty years his junior, with whom he had a son and a daughter. The Schnitzlers became part of the Viennese cultural élite, in which, it seems, everyone knew everyone. Gustav and Alma Mahler were friends, as were Stefan Zweig, Bruno Walter, Felix Salten, and Franz Werfel. The satirist Karl Kraus was an enemy.

Schnitzler was forty-six when his first full-length novel, "The Road Into the Open," was published. It was more than ten years in the writing, and he described it as his "most personal" work. It is also one of his most political, the only one in which he attempted to portray an entire social world, and one of just a handful to address the fraught position of Jews in Viennese society. The action—or, more to the point, inaction—takes place among a group of friends who orbit the salon of the upwardly mobile Ehrenbergs. The characters range from a young Zionist, Leo Golowski, to the Ehrenbergs' son, Oskar, who hates his Orthodox father, rejects his Jewish heritage, and spends his time with aristocratic friends. Everyone is troubled by the problem of whether to think of himself primarily as Jewish or Austrian, and the result is a mood of futility and drift.

"The Road Into the Open" has often been dismissed as a failure. "Aspiring to tragedy, Schnitzler achieves only sadness," the historian Carl Schorske has observed. In fact, Schnitzler was aiming for something more equivocal than tragedy. The novelist within the novel, Heinrich Bermann, a character clearly intended as a self-portrait, declares that tragicomedy is the only appropriate form for a novel (which he is attempting to write) about contemporary Jewish experience. Through Bermann, Schnitzler deliberately undercuts moments of potential tragedy with an edge of cruel wit. When Oskar shoots himself after being publicly struck by his father—he succeeds only in blinding himself in one eye—Bermann objects to anyone's calling it tragic: "The blow from old Ehrenberg was a brutality; Oskar's attempted suicide was foolishness; that he hurt himself so badly was ineptitude. Nothing tragic can result from such things."

Another frequent criticism of "The Road Into the Open" is that Schnitzler's portrait of a fragmented society leads to a fragmented novel. The characters are juxtaposed as they flit through the Ehrenbergs' salon, but they barely interact and they undergo their crises alone. Schnitzler again uses the character of Bermann to justify his approach, in a scene where a disillusioned older writer advises him to be "less just": "You will achieve nothing through objectivity. The public . . . demands that the theme the writer takes up be concluded, or at least that an illusion of this sort be provided." Such cynicism is anathema to Bermann, who has earlier defended his views in words that come as close to an artistic manifesto as anything Schnitzler ever wrote: "The only thing that gives me a certain confidence is the consciousness that I am able to see into the human soul."

At his best, Schnitzler really can see into souls and give voice to the chaos he finds there. In the novel's most memorable scene, Georg von Wergenthin, a dilettante composer and minor aristo-

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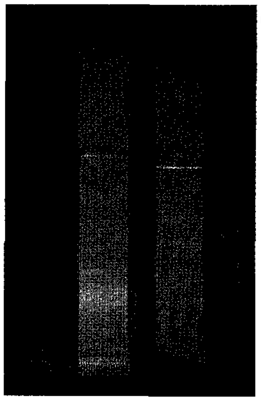

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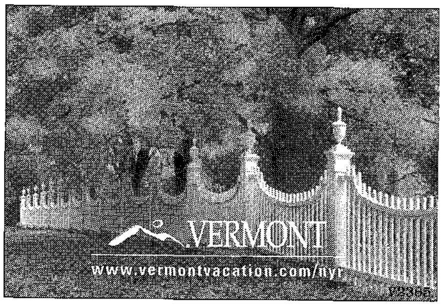

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crat, waits, anxious and guilt-ridden, as his mistress, to whom he has already been unfaithful, gives birth:

> What was I doing a year ago? thought Georg. I was in Vienna, completely alone. I suspected nothing. I had sent her a song. . . . But I hardly thought of her. And now she lies downstairs dying. . . . He was utterly horrified. He had intended to think . . . she lies in pain, and instead it had come to his lips as: she is dying.

In tracing the tiniest movements of conscious thought, Schnitzler registers the way the mind fantasizes the very outcomes it fears.

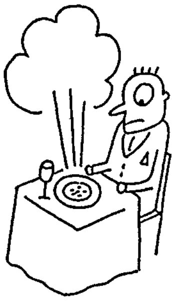
In the event, it is not Georg's mistress but their child who dies. In 1897, a mistress of Schnitzler's had given birth to a stillborn baby. Now, drawing on his own experience, he achieved a harmony rare for him between charting an individual character's thought processes and stating a more general thematic purpose. As Georg's thoughts wander, he dimly grasps the absurdist conclusions that form the novel's anti-message:

> The professor's remark went through his mind, that one to two percent of all births ended like this. Therefore, as long as people have been born it has been so: that of every hundred, one or two must die in this senseless way, in the same moment that they emerged into the light! And so-and-so-many must die in the first year, and so many in the flower of youth, and so many as men, and again a certain number end their own lives, like Labinski, and with so-and-so-many the attempt will fail, like with Oskar Ehrenberg. Why look for reasons?

If "The Road Into the Open" were set thirty years later and in Paris, much of it could pass for a work of French existentialism. Entropy is all: relationships fall listlessly apart, families splinter, and individuals sense the futility of their lives. "True courage," says Heinrich Bermann, in a line that could have come right out of Sartre's "Roads to Freedom" trilogy, "is often nothing other than the expression of a metaphysical conviction, so to speak, of our own superfluousness." Schnitzler may have been formed by the Victorian social forces that Gay describes, but his concerns—human psychology, social disintegration, existential angst—have in turn formed those of our own age.

At the same time, Schnitzler's style has consistently led readers to write him off as dated. Bernard Shaw's judgment, shortly after Schnitzler's death, in 1931, was characteristic: "I class him with those writers of the latter half of the nineteenth century who had lost its illusions and broken with its superstitions without ever escaping from it into the twentieth." Though Schnitzler's work is often formally innovative—he was one of the first writers to use stream-of-consciousness narration—his tastes remained conservative. He had no time for modernism and was suspicious of anything that seemed too high-flown. His fiction, rich with melodramatic climaxes and eye-popping coincidences, offers a tantalizing contradiction: twentieth-century insights in nineteenth-century forms.

Schnitzler went out of fashion quickly, with the outbreak of the First World War. Right before the war, his reputation as a socially significant writer was at its height. His play about institutional anti-Semitism, "Professor Bernhardi," provoked questions in parliament and was (inevitably) banned. He was rumored to be on the shortlist for the Nobel Prize in 1914. But when war came, obliterating the romantic, pleasure-seeking Vienna that was his great subject, he found himself with nothing to say. As a connoisseur of equivocation, nuance, and indeterminacy—early casualties in any war—he was transformed from firebrand to relic almost overnight. Appalled by the sudden nationalistic fervor of his contemporaries, he scribbled pacifist epigrams, hoping to produce a work of significant moral philosophy. The project, unsurprisingly, went nowhere. Meanwhile, his marriage was failing. Olga had tired of subordinating her existence to his. They fought frequently, which made it hard for him to work, and he would flee the house to spend afternoons at the cinema. Eventually, Olga made the mistake of telling Alma Mahler about an affair, with the result that the whole of Vienna soon knew about it. Schnitzler himself was long past caring, but Olga wanted freedom, and a house of her own.

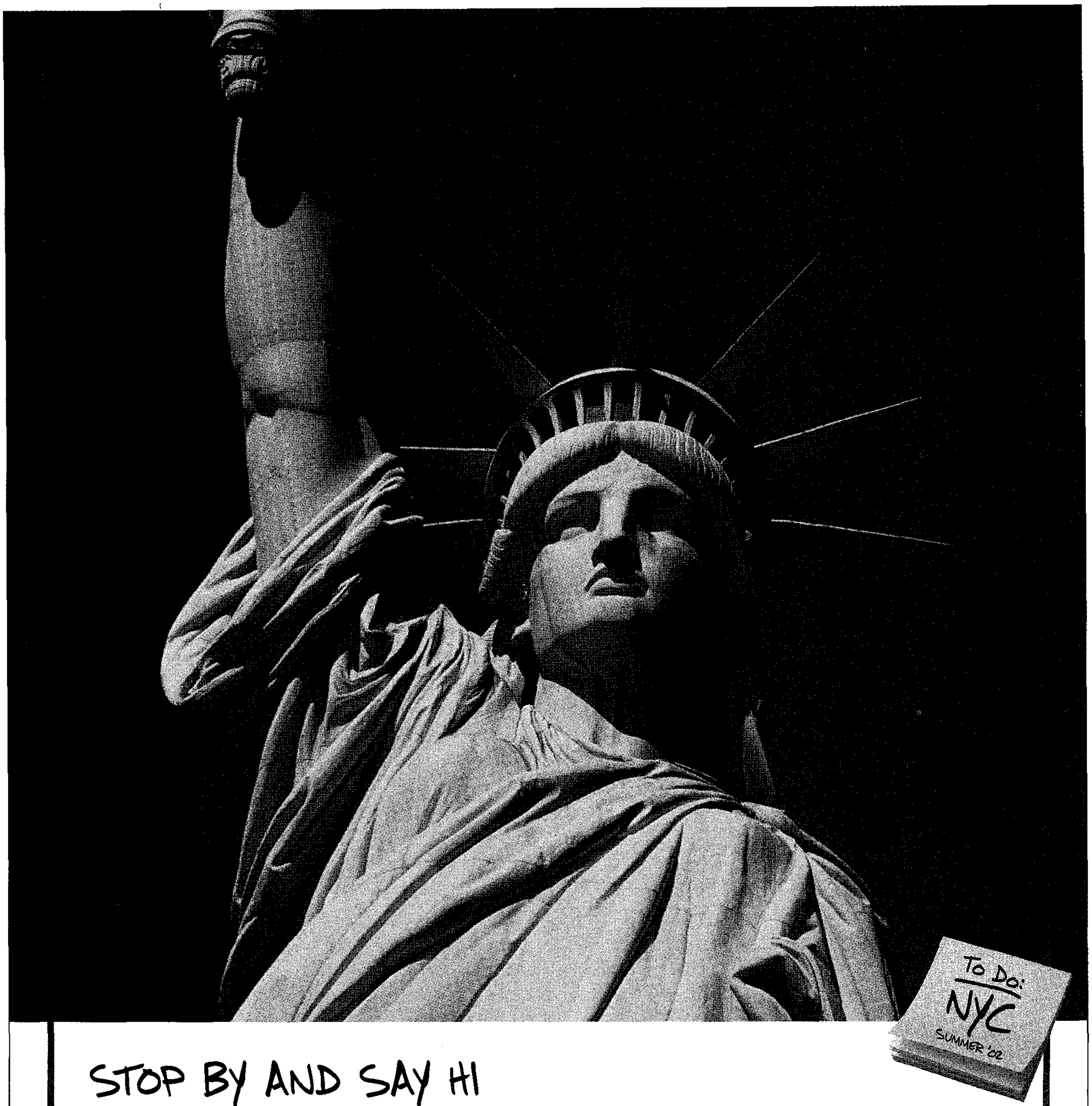


As it turned out, divorce suited Schnitzler. He remained on good terms with Olga and could now romance any young woman who came into his orbit. He also began a long relationship with a friend of his youth, Clara Pollaczek, and quickly repeated all the patterns that had emerged in his marriage. He relied on her intellectually, but emotionally he drove her to distraction. Naturally enough, she was jealous of his other women, and particularly of Olga's continued presence in his life. Here, at least, he could truthfully assure her that she had no need to be jealous, but she replied, "You do not love me." "Difficult to respond to that," he admitted in his diary.

Independence, above all, enabled Schnitzler to get back to work. His finest fiction was written in the nineteen-twenties, including "Traumnovelle," the marital psychomachia that inspired "Eyes Wide Shut"; "Fräulein Else," a headlong account of a young woman's collapse, narrated in an uncannily persuasive stream of consciousness; and the novella "Night Games." Novellas were the ideal form for Schnitzler and his peculiar genius for describing how things feel when the blood is pounding through the brain. What is more, the sense of his own obsolescence, which had made him so despondent in the war years, now paradoxically freed him from any obligation to be socially relevant. So, for instance, where his previous works condemned duelling, the last-published story in Margret Schaefer's collection, "The Second," looks back at the now vanished practice with a kind of ironic nostalgia:

> Life was more beautiful and certainly had a more elevated air in those days—among other reasons, precisely because one sometimes had to put one's life on the line for something that in a higher sense or at least in a different sense possibly did not exist. . . . For honor, for example, or the virtue of a beloved woman, or the good reputation of a sister, or for some other such triviality. . . . That alone, believe me, gave social life a certain dignity or at least a certain style.

In some respects, this retreat from social involvement returns Schnitzler



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to where he began, close to the jaded facetiousness of Anatol, who might easily have remarked on the "certain style" of a lethal duel. But the irony has darkened over the years, and in the next sentence we see why. "In the course of the last decades people were required to sacrifice their lives for even more insignificant things, completely needlessly and at the command or wish of others." His lightness of touch is not a lack of seriousness but, rather, an intrinsic part of the project—a refusal to take people or societies more seriously than they deserve.

Schnitzler's final stories are, inevitably, elegies for a vanished world. It is surely significant that several of them end in suicide, as if the self-destruction of individuals embodied the disaster of a whole society rushing into oblivion. In the novella "Night Games," a young officer, Lieutenant Wilhelm Kasda—precisely the sort of person Schnitzler would once have satirized—is ruined in a game of baccarat. He has a day to raise the money or his honor as an officer will be lost and suicide his only option. Few writers could hope to equal the intensity with which Schnitzler imagines Kasda's desperation as he begs for money, first from a rich uncle and then from a woman he slept with once and then neglected. When the suicide comes, however, the narration switches to a tragicomic mode that is almost Chekhovian. The uncle, arriving too late with the money, cuts a painfully foolish figure beside the corpse:

> "Here's the money, Willi! She gave it to me this morning. The whole eleven thousand, Willi! Here it is!" And he turned around to the others as though imploring them to bear witness. "That's the entire amount, gentlemen! Eleven thousand gulden!"—as though, now that the money was there, they should at least make some effort to revive the dead man.

On July 26, 1928, Schnitzler's daughter, Lili, eighteen years old and newly married, was about to go out for a walk with her husband but went back to get something from the bathroom, took his revolver, and shot herself in the chest. She died the next day. It was an event her father might easily have written. Even at the time, the ever-faithful Clara privately thought that Schnitzler's moral softness had blighted Lili's upbringing and contributed to her demise. For Schnitzler, the brutal force of the event was impossible to withstand. To Clara he wrote that "the word *pain* has become ridiculous, as I now realize that I experience for the first time what God meant by it." Yet the utter incomprehensibility of what Lili had done was emphatically Schnitzlerian. As she lay dying in hospital, she had time to confide that she had not really wanted to kill herself. It had been a "moment of nervousness," an inexplicable impulse, almost an accident. She didn't know what she was thinking of. This confirmation of his own ideas about human motivation was no comfort to Schnitzler, of course, as he and his family struggled to understand what had happened. They read Lili's diaries and correspondence, looking for clues, but she had seemed perfectly happy in letters written only the day before. "That last moment becomes ever more ungraspable," Schnitzler wrote. His diary describes the nightmares that pursued him through the following months, in which Lili's suicide appeared in transmuted forms, like embryos of stories that Schnitzler would never write. He dreamed that Lili had got into a quarrel in a card game and was fighting a duel. She is pale and silent, looking like a mummy in a black dress, and he explains that if she shoots herself her opponent will be sentenced to death. He dreamed he was on his knees imploring her not to kill herself, then awoke with relief that it was only a dream, before realizing the truth once more.

"My life is at an end," he said simply. In fact, he lived another three years, even managing to work a little, but his health began to fail and he had suddenly become an old man. When Olga saw him that summer, she was reduced to tears by the sight of his frailty. "I hate farewells," Schnitzler said tersely. On October 21, 1931, Clara had a telephone call from Schnitzler's secretary, who had found him collapsed after a stroke. He was unconscious by the time Clara arrived at his bedside, but she held him in her arms as he slipped away. The master of mixed emotions and unsentimental irony died in the embrace of one of the many women he relied on but could not love. ◆

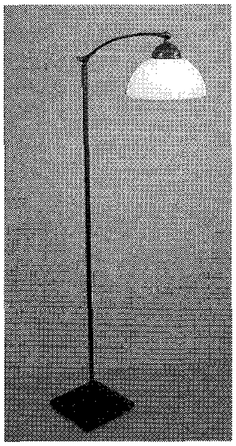
BRIEFLY NOTED

The White, *by Deborah Larsen (Knopf; $22).* In 1758, sixteen-year-old Mary Jemison was seized by Shawnee warriors from her homestead in southwestern Pennsylvania; she witnessed the scalping of her family, and was then adopted by two Seneca sisters to take the place of their brother, who had been killed by whites. The crux of this starkly beautiful novel, based on an account of Mary's life published in 1823, is her ultimate decision not to be "redeemed"—released from captivity. The author, a poet, channels the violence of Mary's life into spare, almost Biblical prose, and delivers a transfixing portrait of a woman who, no longer considered white and never wholly Seneca, refuses to be defined by tragedy: "I will not open these wounds again so as to satisfy anyone's idea of what it is to be human."

You Are Not a Stranger Here, *by Adam Haslett (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $21.95).* The characters in this début collection, many of them gay, many of them depressed, are plagued by the sense that they once had the temerity "to spear mediocrity in the eye." Now, dismayed by the niceties of everyday life, they compulsively scrutinize the people around them, as if this could teach them how to live. These muted stories are driven by the moments of crystallization that result: a boy suddenly knows that his brother is going to die; a lonely teen-ager finds relief as the target of a classmate's violence; a self-absorbed, manic-depressive father discovers that he is unable to say goodbye to his son. All this can be a little gloomy, but Haslett is an eloquent, precise miniaturist, and his characters' struggles with their own assumptions collectively provide a fascinating snapshot of life during the era of Prozac, when new ways of thinking about emotion have forced us to adjust our notion of identity and even, perhaps, of grace.

Ghosts of the Fireground, *by Peter M. Leschak (HarperSanFrancisco; $24.95).* If almost no one has heard of the Great Peshtigo Fire of 1871, which consumed an entire Wisconsin town and killed twelve hundred people, that's because it occurred at the same time as the Great Chicago Fire. But Peshtigo was a far more potent example of just how devastating and uncontrollable fire can be, which is why it fascinates the author. In this curious blend of history and autobiography, Leschak, himself a wildland firefighter, intersperses an account of the Peshtigo disaster with stories of his own experience on the fireground. The result is often formally awkward, but the material is gripping, and Leschak does an excellent job of evoking both the terror and the majesty of a raging fire. In clean, understated prose, he describes the world of the firefighter, in which endless days of waiting give way to hours of intensity and exaltation. Firefighters, Leschak suggests, may not like fires, but they're never happier than when they're in the middle of one.

The Art of Travel, *by Alain de Botton (Pantheon; $23).* Once again, de Botton employs what has become his unique literary combination punch—the left jabbing hard at immediate experience, the right swinging long from a muscular knowledge of philosophy and belles lettres—to take on a quotidian subject. In this new book, he considers travel as he has previously considered Proust and the Stoics, and takes the reader on a tour of service stations and the Sublime, beach bungalows and Baudelaire's escapist fantasies. Once again, de Botton's desire to teach at all times, and his refusal to consider practical needs smaller than abstract ones—just as he wanted Proust to change your life, he now wants Baudelaire to help you endure airports more easily—makes his writing not only shapely but somehow ingenuous and lovable even in its wildest flights.



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THE CURRENT CINEMA

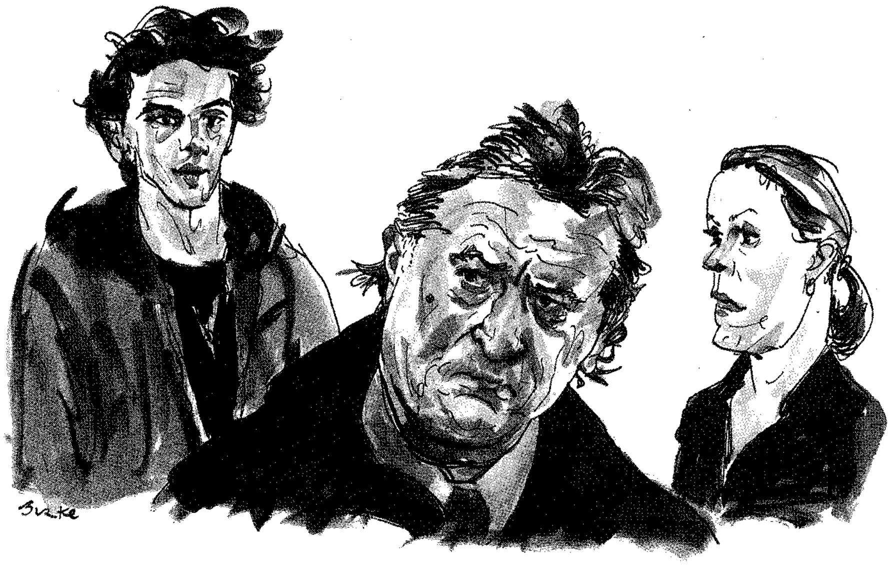
UNREAL LIFE

"City by the Sea," "Simone."

BY DAVID DENBY

Robert De Niro speaks in quiet, even tones throughout much of the dolorous family melodrama "City by the Sea." De Niro is Vincent LaMarca, a respected Manhattan homicide detective who has cut himself off from an earlier time of trouble out in Long Beach, Long Island. Years ago, Vincent's father kidnapped a baby for ransom; the child, hidden in the back seat of a car, accidentally suffocated and the father was convicted of murder and executed. Later, Vincent, as a grown man, ran away from Long Beach, leaving behind his quarrelsome wife (Patty LuPone) and their young son, Joey (James Franco), who is now about twenty-one and a junkie. The city itself, once a resort filled with happy bathers, has turned into South Bronx by the Sea, and Joey lives like a rat in an abandoned casino on the boardwalk. De Niro tells his girlfriend (Frances McDormand) about these disasters as if he were describing a hard day on the beat. When she looks stunned, he just repeats the facts. He has lived with these sorrows for years; his manner suggests that he will always live with them, that you stick to business and do your job whatever mess you have made of your life. But his stoicism is just tight-lipped enough to make us wonder if he's avoiding things—denying guilty feelings as well as bad memories. The Scottish director Michael Caton-Jones, who worked successfully with De Niro in "This Boy's Life," allows that ambiguity to grow. And Caton-Jones is wise to keep the volume down, since the story, based on actual incidents reported by the late Mike McAlary in a 1997 article in *Esquire*, offers an almost grotesque pileup of tragedies. Joey kills a drug dealer in a fight and is suspected by the police of also killing a cop—Vincent's partner, no less. But De Niro, frowning slightly as he moves about the city and the beach, keeps this heavy-spirited movie on track for long stretches. His underplaying shows the kind of balance and lightness gained from long experience with "dark" material.

"City by the Sea" opens with footage of Long Beach in its glory days, some fifty years ago, then cuts to the present and feasts on the sordid clutter on the boardwalk, the smashed windows and trash everywhere, the occasional derelict walking the ragged streets behind the beach. (For an extra touch of decaying grandeur, the movie was actually shot in Asbury Park, New Jersey.) We're not told why the town has deteriorated so badly, but the implication is that once the good cop Vincent LaMarca left, a kind of curse fell on the hot-dog stands and beach blankets. Nestling among the garbage, young James Franco, who played James Dean in a TNT movie last year, is tall and slender, with luminous, suffering eyes. Franco may have some talent, but the part, as written, isn't very interesting—Joey seems stupid as well as unhappy. We're supposed to think that his father's leaving him and his mother blighted his life, but did it reduce his intelligence, too? Vincent is the smart one, and the movie is structured around the issue of his mixed responsibilities to Joey. Will he arrest his own son? Will he help the boy he abandoned? Are the sins of the father visited upon the son, or, in this case, the grandson? Ken Hixon's screenplay lays in the Arthur Miller bricks, but when father and son get together at last, facing each other one night at the beach, the writing falls apart. After the complex buildup of tensions, the last ten minutes of the movie are a comic-pathetic letdown: the subdued acting and the trash-strewn street scenes lead to nothing more striking than the kind of overexplicit clichés heard in mediocre TV dramas. Even De Niro's discipline and skill can't save lines that should never have been spoken in the first place.



James Franco, Robert De Niro, and Frances McDormand in a seaside melodrama.

PHILIP BURKE

Some of my favorite critics have kicked around the comedy "Simone" as if it were a hapless loser. Expecting nothing, I went to the movie just to watch Al Pacino get tired (his hoarse voice and drooping lids always make me feel stronger), and I wound up having a good time. I don't believe that anyone will have much trouble seeing what's wrong with the picture, but it's one of those bad movies that you remember with a smile a year later. "Simone" is a Hollywood satire of Hollywood, which means, essentially, that it has no claws. The writer-director Andrew Niccol makes fun of phonies, sycophants, and spoiled brats in so mild a way that the worst phonies and brats in the studios will probably enjoy it. And I would be the first to admit that Niccol's premise seems fatigued: Viktor Taransky (Pacino), a bedraggled director of "art" films who hasn't had a hit in ages, accepts a gift from a dying fan who is a computer nut—a synthesized female "star," entirely digital, her existence confined to a hard disk. Simone (an amalgamation of "Simulation One") is tall, blond, tanned, and big-boned, with a wide mouth and a slightly muzzy voice. She has terrific lips—she's a kissable image. She's meant to be part Marilyn, part Madonna, part Lauren Bacall, and part Meryl Streep (too *much* Meryl Streep, Viktor decides at one point, taking a little Streepiness out of the mix). Viktor feeds her into a romantic drama he's shooting that a petulant star (Winona Ryder) has walked out on, and when the picture is released Simone becomes a sensation. What is Viktor to do? He can't produce her for the public, so he tells everyone that she's reclusive, like Garbo, and creates ersatz interviews with her that he offers to the media. In the interviews (he speaks her lines, and, digitized and scrambled, they come out as her purr), Simone praises her great director, and Viktor's career takes off. Now, the figure of the desperate show-business personality who turns to fraud in order to revive himself is an idea out of "The Producers" and many other farces. In "Simone," the premise is thin to begin with, and Niccol repeats his basic setup over and over. "I am the death of real," Viktor says in Simone's voice. Still, thin premise or not, the issue of digital fabrication can't be entirely ignored. I know women who have touched Arnold Schwarzenegger, but who knows whether Vin Diesel has red blood and not zeroes and ones coursing through his veins? Does Britney Spears exist outside of teen-marketing surveys?

Andrew Niccol did the screenplay for "The Truman Show," which explored some of the same ideas about virtual reality in a formally ambitious way, and he directed the sci-fi thriller "Gattaca," which was about a future composed of genetically perfect people. He may not be much interested in life as it's actually lived on this earth. When Niccol directs comedy, his indifference causes his work to become slovenly and inaccurate. The reporters chasing Simone are made into a scrofulous bunch—they're too crudely portrayed to be funny. And the public is just a bunch of anonymous saps. Even worse, there's nothing electrifying about Simone onscreen. For the record, the image is not a digital fabrication; Simone is played by a real woman, the Canadian model Rachel Roberts. But, even if Roberts causes a sensation someday as a model, she's too bland and vague to stir the public as an actress. Her voice isn't provocative; it's just untrained and cloudy.

What redeems "Simone" is the crazed vanity of the broken-tailed peacock Viktor Taransky. Again and again, he speaks up boldly for the autonomy of the artist; he attacks the tyranny of plutocratic stars, with their absurd special needs and arbitrary moods. But the joke that some of the film's reviewers don't seem to have enjoyed very much is that Viktor is a fourth-rate auteur. His movies, which have titles like "Straw God" and "Eternity Forever," look like Antonioni films reconceived by an overqualified director of perfume commercials—vast, empty pastel vistas fall away from the camera in pompous perspective, decorated with only an Italian sports car or a naked, De Chirico-type building. Viktor is not an artist but a hack with artistic pretensions, and what he wants is not freedom but adoration and money. As Viktor's attempt to disguise Simone's nature grows more frenzied, Pacino, his hair standing on end, his eyes glaring, does some of his funniest work since "Dick Tracy." If I'm not mistaken, he has pulled off a dead-accurate imitation of the late John Cassavetes, a lodestar of integrity for many people but a man who, for others, could be noble, manic, and full of it all at once. ♦

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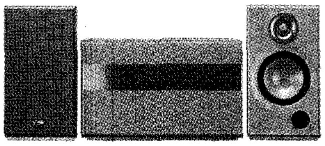

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THE GODFATHERS BY PAUL RUDNICK

Michael S. Ovitz, once the reigning uber-agent and dealmaker of Hollywood . . . chose to give a blistering and, to many, bewildering interview to Vanity Fair. He said that a "gay mafia" was largely responsible for engineering his downfall.—*The Times*.

MEMO TO: All federal agents.

RE: The F.B.I.'s racketeering division recently infiltrated the nation's alleged Gay Mafia, with operatives working under cover as vicious choreographers, neo-con columnists, and chatty houseboys. These moles have discovered many significant differences between this far-reaching criminal enterprise and its heterosexual counterpart.

1. Gay godfathers usually are godfathers, but they can also be favorite uncles, athletic aunts, and brothers-in-law who do publicity.

2. The Broadway community has been repeatedly terrorized by gay thugs, who will often force the entire cast of a musical comedy to raise their arms at the end of every number.

3. High-ranking members of the Gay Mafia communicate almost exclusively by phone. Code phrases include "Stop it," "So when I ran into him I was very so-fine-we-had-sex-so-what-I-still-hate-you," and "Oh, she's one to talk."

4. Gay hit men have been known to slaughter a rival simply by entering his apartment, glancing around, and commenting, "Oh, I love that, you're still doing Mission."

5. A gay crime boss will often terrorize a capo by leaving the severed head of his cleaning woman in his bed.

6. There is definitely a female Gay Mafia, and they all sided with Ellen.

7. The Gay Mafia's links to the Catholic Church are extensive, and most often begin with the phrase "Jimmy, did you know that the Apostles liked to wrestle?"

8. There is an unbreakable Gay Mafia code of silence, but it lasts only until a member's best friend answers the page.

9. A person becomes a "made man" in the Gay Mafia only when he orders unnecessary T-shirts just so Abercrombie & Fitch will keep him on its mailing list.

10. The Gay Mafia has its origins in ancient Greece, when Don Plato first remarked to a group of graceful youths, "I am so over Carthage."

11. The Gay Mafia has been known to threaten highly placed figures in the fashion industry by refusing to purchase anything from their home collections.

12. Even the most powerful gay dons do not dare to challenge Michael Feinstein.

13. The Gay Mafia is rumored to have important ties to Nancy Sinatra.

14. The Gay Mafia is assumed to have connections with dockworkers and longshoremen, because they're just so damn hot.

15. Gay Mafia dons are also called rons and davids.

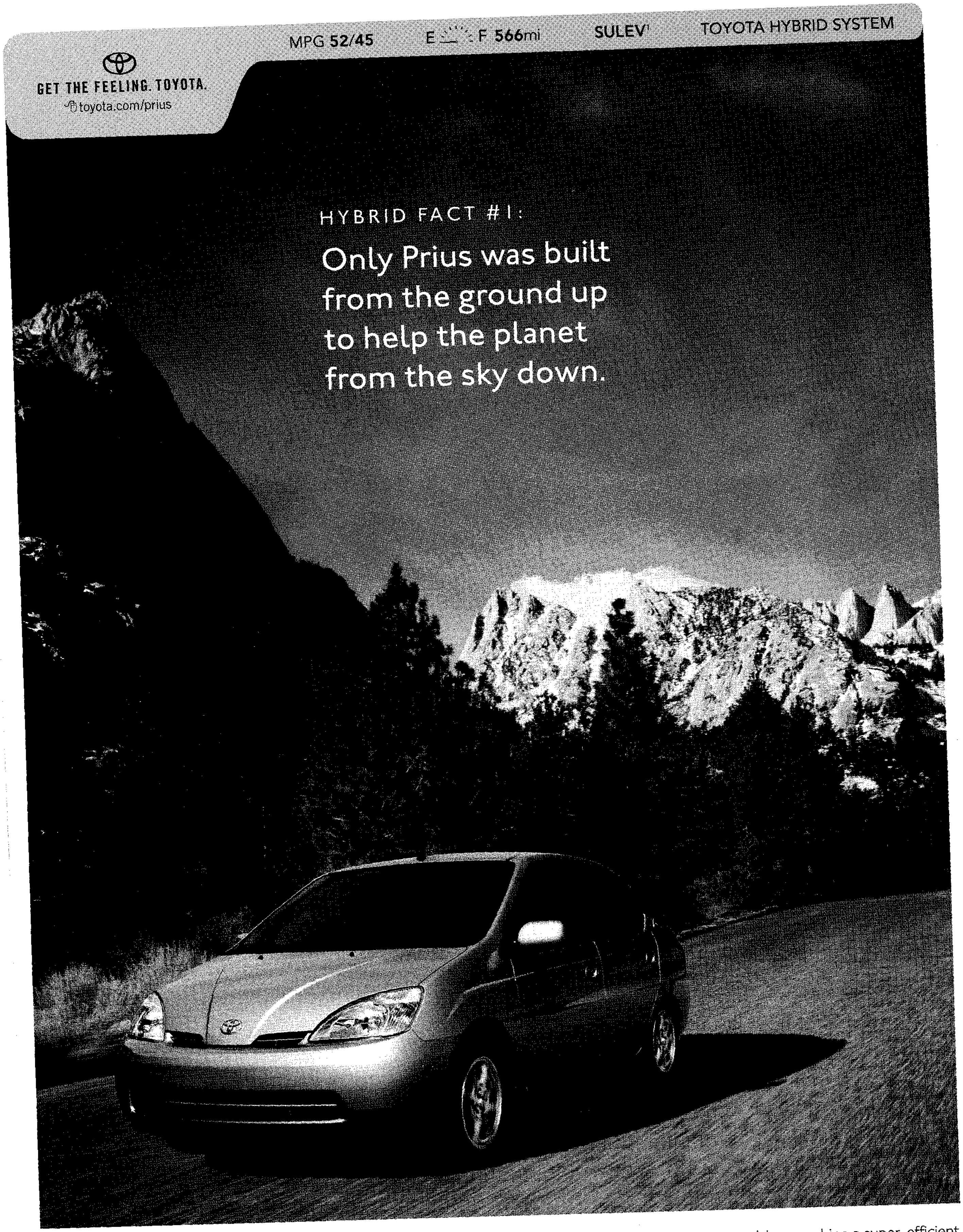
16. The Gay Mafia has been linked to prostitution, drugs, and pornography, especially as gifts.

17. The Transgendered Mafia is becoming a major player, mostly because they're so tall.

18. Gay mafiosi are particularly fond of the movie "Scarface," but they think it's the life of Joan Rivers.

19. Lieutenants in the Gay Mafia are usually heavily armed, especially during tank-top season.

20. Capos in the Gay Mafia will often abduct an informer, bring him out to the New Jersey Meadowlands, and leave him there.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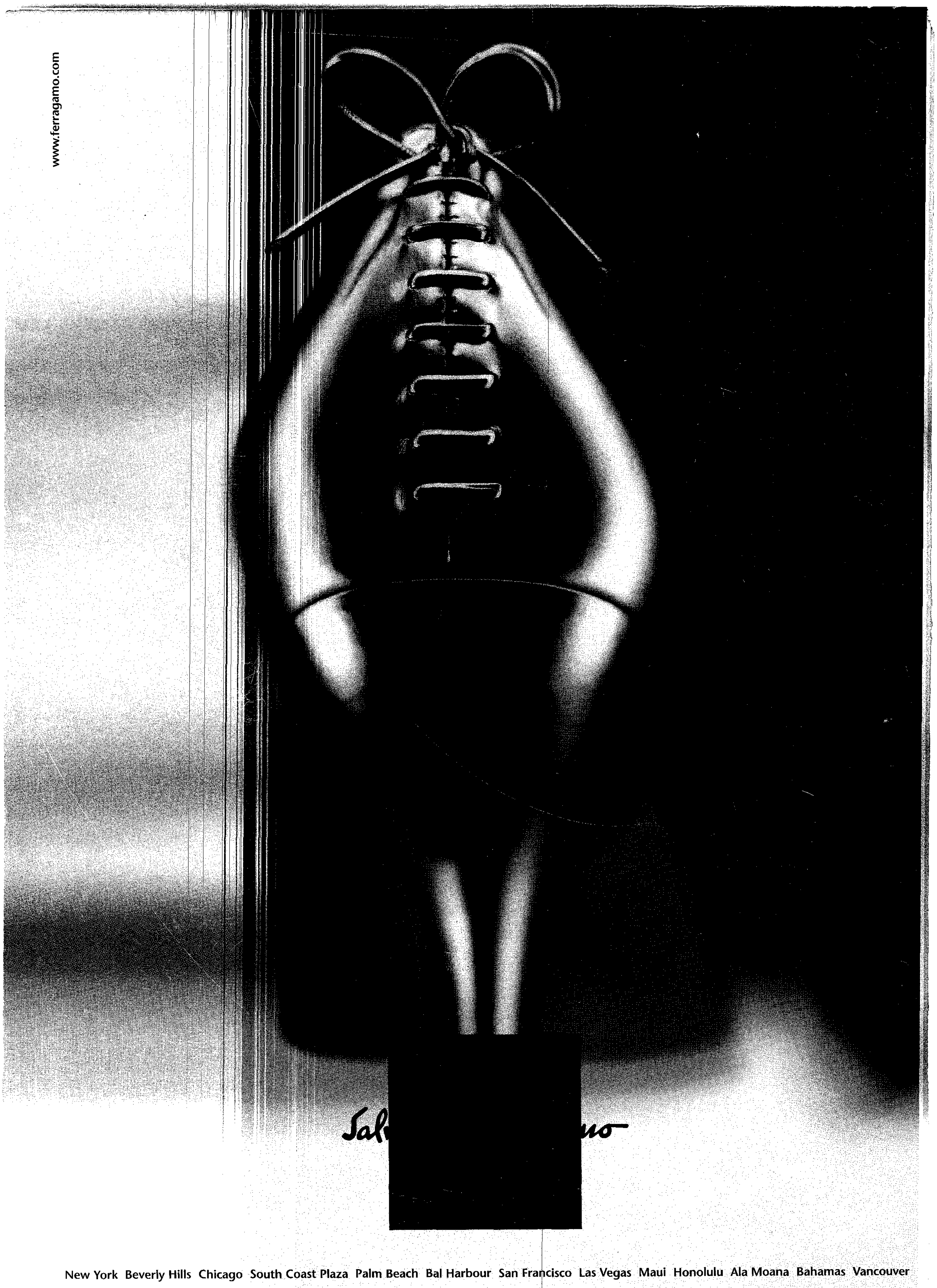
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